

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE VERSUS COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL DIVORCE-  
PARENTING PROGRAMS ON PARENTAL CONFLICT, INTIMATE VIOLENCE,  
PARENTAL COMMUNICATION, DIVORCE-RELATED PARENTAL BEHAVIORS  
AND CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

By

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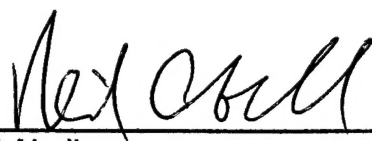
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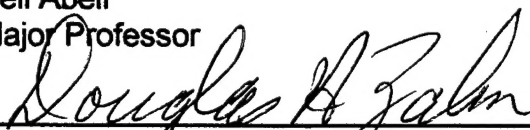
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This work is dedicated to the thousands of children each year that experience the end of their parent's marital relationship. May we continue to pursue, through all possible means, ways to foster supportive and enduring relationships between these children and each of their parents.



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the effects of two State of Florida mandated divorce-parenting classes, one cognitive-based and the other cognitive-behavioral based, on several individual and family variables. Overall effects of the two groups combined on the dependent variables were also studied. The two-group pretest-posttest design with a three-month follow-up measured parent's knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors, reports of intimate violence, destructive conflict tactics, parental communication, conflicts of interest, children's behavior problems and child exposure to parental conflict. The covariates of prior participation in divorce mediation services and history of an intimate violence incident were also measured. Ninety-eight parents completed all three measures. Paired sample  $t$  tests, independent sample  $t$  tests, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) were all used to analyze the data.

Results showed little differences between the cognitive and cognitive-behavioral courses on the study's dependent variables. Some evidence indicated that the parents who participated in the cognitive-behavioral course reported being slightly better at communicating with each other than parents in the cognitive course. Strong evidence was discovered showing that both courses increased parent's knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors from pre-class to post-class. This increase in knowledge was still evident at

three-month follow-up. Parents in both classes also reported no increase in intimate violence, as measured by the use of permanent injunctions, between them three months after attending the course. Suggestions for future research are provided including a strong recommendation that clinicians and researchers advocate for judicial and legislative support of the use of true control groups in future investigations of these programs. The study exemplifies the type of outcome focused intervention research that has been shown to be consistently missing in the profession of social work.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

In many legal jurisdictions today, when parents file for divorce, they are often encouraged or mandated to attend an educational program on parenting after divorce. These court-endorsed divorce parenting education programs have emerged as a community-based effort to reduce the negative impact of divorce on children and their families. Acting on the belief that these programs reduce parental conflict, increase parental sensitivity to their children's post-divorce needs, and improve overall child adjustment to divorce, hundreds of counties nationwide have sanctioned and even mandated their creation and implementation. A 1996 survey found that 541 U.S. counties had adopted divorce-parenting programs (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). By 1998 the number of counties providing these programs had almost tripled to 1,516 (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). Social workers have not only actively participated in the development and provision of these programs, they remain the primary mental health profession conducting divorce-parenting courses throughout the country (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998).

The creation and development of divorce-parenting classes has been fueled, in part, by the growth both in the number of divorces and the number of children impacted by the cessation of their parent's marital relationship. Divorce rates appear to have remained stable since 1988. However, almost 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce, and an additional 17% of all couples will separate but not divorce (Castro-Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Furstenberg, Sherwood & Sullivan, 1992; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Over one million children annually are affected by these changes in their parent's relationship (Furstenberg, Sherwood & Sullivan, 1992; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

Limited empirical research has been done regarding divorce parenting programs' effectiveness in managing the problems they were created to address. However, some initial systematic investigations have found that parents value these programs, that they have learned useful parenting communication skills, and that skills-based courses appear to result in decreasing the exposure of children to parental conflict (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1996; Kramer, & Washo, 1993; Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis & Hoza, 1998; Kurkowski, Gordon, & Arbuthnot, 1993). Little is still known regarding their actual effect on parental conflict, child post-divorce adjustment or if they change how parents interact with their children.

Questions also remain regarding the most effective instructional approach or undergirding theoretical basis for these programs. There is some evidence that skills-based courses, emanating from cognitive-behavioral treatment, are

more effective at reducing child exposure to parental conflict than information-based or strictly cognitive theory driven programs (Kramer et al, 1998).

However, effect size differences between groups have been relatively small, and no known effort has been conducted to replicate these findings in other research settings.

Research efforts to date have also not determined the impact divorce-parenting courses have on the level of physical and verbal abuse between former partners. There is growing debate over the appropriateness of these courses for couples who may have a history of domestic violence. Some allege that such programs may actually precipitate incidents of violence by encouraging conflicting parents to interact (Hart, 1990). The frequency and severity of maltreatment between separated and divorced partners has been shown to increase both during and after the divorce (Harlow, 1991; Sun & Woods, 1989). In response to these concerns, others point out that preventive interventions like divorce-parenting classes have demonstrated some effectiveness in reducing child-exposure to conflict, and that there is no evidence that they increase domestic violence behaviors (Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis & Hoza, 1998). Initial efforts have been made to promote violence-sensitive divorce parenting classes that seek to "identify and change messages that would be harmful if adopted by perpetrators and victims of domestic violence" (Fuhrmann, McGill & O'Connell, 1999, p.24).

Although there are multiple and varying estimates regarding the prevalence of intimate violence, it is clear that even low estimates reflect an



ongoing and pervasive problem of abuse and maltreatment nationwide. At least 11-12% of men are physically violent toward their partners (Sun & Woods, 1989). One fifth to one third of all women in the United States are physically abused at some point in their lives (Brygger & Edleson, 1987). Strauss & Gelles (1990) estimate that annually more than two million women across the country are battered by their male partners. There is some evidence to indicate that increasing numbers of men are being harmed by their female partners, yet the severity of injury is considerably less (Cantos, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1994).

The effects on children of exposure to intimate violence from one parent to another are becoming increasingly clear. These children regularly experience ongoing deficits in social, academic and emotional functioning (Johnston & Roseby, 1997). Children who witness such violence have been shown to experience loyalty conflicts in trying to choose sides between parents, and are frequently victims of abuse themselves at the hand of the same parent batterer (Peled, 1995). There is growing evidence to conclude that these child impairments persist into adolescence and adulthood (Emery, 1988; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982). Of equal concern is the likelihood that these children will continue to repeat these maladaptive patterns of intimate violence within their own relationships as they reach adulthood (Johnston & Roseby, 1997).

The impact of divorce on children has been well established within the literature. Demo and Acock's (1988) review of existing research on children of divorce concluded that an extensive number of studies had shown that young children experience temporary to long-term difficulty as a result of divorce.

Similarly, Kelly's (1993) analysis of empirically grounded research determined that children of divorce "exhibit more aggression, impulsive, and antisocial behaviors, have more difficulty in their peer relationships, are less compliant with authority figures, and show more problems in school" (p. 30). Additionally, Amato and Keith's (1991) meta-analysis concluded that divorce has been found to lower the overall well being of children.

Numerous researchers have sought to determine what elements of divorce are most strongly correlated with poor post-divorce child adjustment. Previous and ongoing parental conflict has repeatedly been associated with impairment in the lives of these children (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hess & Camera, 1979; Raschke & Raschke, 1979). Moreover, multiple studies have shown that children manage better in the context of an environment where parents relate in a less conflictual and hostile manner (Emery, 1982; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Peck, 1989; Stolberg & Garrison, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Divorce parenting programs almost universally seek to convince parents that this conflict is harmful to their children and that children benefit from parental cooperation (Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLuse, 1996).

Multiple states have now moved to mandate divorcing parent classes along with initiating mechanisms to study and standardize them (Geasler & Blaisure, 1999). The State of Florida recently enacted legislation defining minimum divorce-parenting course curriculum standards in an attempt to both regulate and standardize these programs (Capshew & Whitworth, 1998). Included in this effort was the development of the first instrument specifically

designed to measure the effectiveness of divorce-parenting courses, the Parent Course Evaluation Instrument or PCEI (Capshew , Whitworth & Abell, 2000). Recommended minimum curriculum standards for parenting courses in Florida now include the following topics:

1. Divorce as loss
2. Permanency of parental role/shared parenting
3. Children's developmental stages
4. Communicating with your children
5. Communication with the other parent
6. Spouse and child abuse
7. Legal concepts
8. Visitation
9. Where to find additional help
10. Reference List

### **Focus of the Study**

The current study seeks to address some of the significant gaps identified in the research on divorce-parenting programs. Consistent with that aim, the study principally attempts to investigate the following overall research question: What effects do a cognitive-behavioral versus a strictly cognitive-based standardized minimum curriculum divorce-parenting course have on coparental communication, parental conflict, child exposure to that conflict, domestic violence, child behavior problems and parent's divorce-related behaviors toward their children?

The outline of the dissertation is as follows. Chapter Two is a review of literature related to divorce-parenting education. Included within this review are an explication of the key terms and concepts generally associated with divorce-parenting, and a critique of the key investigations into divorce-parenting. The conceptual and theoretical framework of these programs and the study's hypotheses are also presented. Chapter Three presents an expansive review of the current study's quasi-experimental design. Chapter Four presents the results of the quasi-experiment. A discussion of these results, to include an explication of their significance and meaning in the development of research into divorce parenting interventions, is provided in Chapter Five. Appendices are provided which specify critical elements of the literature review and the current investigation.

#### Delimitations

The sample for this study only includes individuals in Bay County, Florida who are in the process of divorce and who have one or more minor children. All parents in the state of Florida are required to complete a court approved divorce-parenting program prior to entry of a final divorce judgement by the court. The study focuses on measuring parents just before they attend the course, immediately after program completion, and again three months after. The assessment of participants at three months after the program allowed for some evaluation of "divorced parents". However, these findings should only be understood to reflect newly divorced individuals versus those who have been divorced for an extended period of time. Although financial limitations preclude

the study from measuring divorced parents at the one, two or three year points beyond the divorce, future research efforts should seek to obtain this valuable information.

The sample is further restricted to parents attending the divorce-parenting program in Bay County, Florida. The population of Bay County is estimated as approximately 150,000 (Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 1998). Almost 20,000 or about 14%, of those residents are designated as "non-whites" (Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 1998). No subjects from large urban cities were included in the study. Whatever generalizations may be drawn are limited to subjects with similar demographic characteristics.

### **Relevance to Social Work**

In spite of the growth of divorce parenting programs, only minimal information regarding such courses can be found within social work literature. In fact, the majority of data on divorce parenting is published in legal journals. This lack of social work material is especially disconcerting given that social workers are already actively involved in helping many of these families. Social work professionals are uniquely suited to articulate the conceptual assumptions of divorce parenting programs and to systematically research program effectiveness.

Social workers have an extensive history of treating, intervention with and advocacy for families experiencing transition and conflict. One of the profession's pioneers, Mary Richmond, is likely best known for her work in family assessment. Other social workers such as Satir (1964) and McGoldrick

(McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985) played pivotal roles in the development of the interdisciplinary family therapy movement that began in the 1950's (Proctor, Davis, & Vosler, 1995).

In addition to being consistent with the profession's long held concern for families, the current research also reflects an increased desire within social work to investigate the empirical effectiveness of interventions (Fischer, 1973, Harrison & Thyer, 1988). This work conforms with recent calls for expanded outcome focused investigations into interventions that social workers have played major roles in creating and promoting (Shilling, 1997; Thomas & Rothman, 1994). Social workers have been and continue to act as the primary mental health profession both creating and conducting divorce-parenting courses throughout the country (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998).

There remains a general lack of outcome focused intervention research that is both replicable and usable by social work practitioners. Rosen, Proctor and Staudt (1999) recently found that only 15% of articles in current (i.e., 1993 to 1997) social work journals were focused on intervention research. They additionally discovered the absence of studies that are replicable and functional to social workers in the field. Moreover, they found only a small number of studies that "detailed the operational definitions or described precise practitioner activities" (Rosen, et al., 1999, p. 9). The current study meets the requirements for the type of research Rosen and his colleagues found missing in the field. Reliable measures are employed in this research to examine the outcomes of a popular intervention (i.e., divorce-parenting education) that has been largely

created and implemented by social workers (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). Specific attention is given to providing clearly defined variables and constructs, and giving detailed descriptions of the actual interventions.

In the absence of deliberate efforts to identify and understand the results of parents participating in divorce-parenting classes, it will be difficult, and arguably inconsistent with social work ethics, to continue to advocate for individuals to be mandated to attend these programs (Myers & Thyer, 1997). If courses do not result in producing some of the outcomes they were created for, then resources should be shifted to programs that have been proven to work or to classes focused on intervening in those families with the most violence (Kibler, Sanchez, & Baker-Jackson, 1994; McIsaac & Finn, 1999).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF**

### **DIVORCE PARENTING EDUCATION LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of literature related to divorce – parenting education. The text begins with a review of the method used to gather and analyze relevant literature. This is followed by an explication of the key terms and concepts generally associated with these programs and the divorcing families they seek to help. Included in this review is an explanation of the content, nature and development of divorce-parenting classes. A critique of the key investigations designed to measure the effectiveness of these programs is then provided. This is followed by an explication of the conceptual framework underpinning these programs. The chapter closes with the hypotheses for the current study.

#### **Method of Literature Review**

A systematic research synthesis (Rothman & Thomas, 1994) was employed as an orderly means to gather, organize, and interpret the relevant information on divorce parenting programs. This method is seen as a viable research alternative to more statistically-based procedures, such as a meta-



analysis, when limited empirical research has been conducted in an area (Rothman, Damron-Rodriquez & Shenassa, 1994).

The search for relevant literature was guided by several criteria. Literature related to the two primary subject areas, divorce parenting education and the impact of divorce on children and families, provided the overriding umbrellas under which information would be sought. Key words employed in the search included parenting, divorce, coparenting, parenting course, parent training, intimate/domestic violence, measures/instruments of divorce, measures/instruments of parenting, children of divorce, impact of divorce, divorced families, post-divorce adjustment, and parental conflict. The time frame included literature over the last 25 years. Although divorce-parenting education has mostly developed over the last ten years, the larger time frame was employed to capture early foundational work regarding the impact of divorce on children. Specific data sources included Psychlit, Current Contents, Legal Index, Social Science Index, Lexus Nexus, First Search, and Sociofile.

A comparatively moderate amount of literature regarding divorce-parenting education was found. Twenty articles specifically addressing divorce-parenting programs were located. Of those twenty, only nine conducted systematic research into a divorce parenting program or programs. The other eleven articles provided only basic program descriptions of a specific divorce parenting course where no systematic research was conducted or they were surveys of what type of programs are offered in different geographical areas. A methodological summary of the nine research-focused studies is provided in

Appendix A. Each of these nine articles is also evaluated below in relation to their design, sampling strategies, data analysis and measurement instruments. The eleven program description articles were excluded from this more detailed examination due to their lack of empirically based characteristics or their focus on simply describing divorce-parenting courses. A closer examination and critique of the nine articles that conducted systematic investigations of divorce-parenting programs appeared warranted given the developing nature of divorce-parenting research and its insufficient "proven" empirical basis. This is in contrast to the studies reviewed in the Conceptual Foundations section of this paper regarding the impact of divorce on children which has received expansive research attention over the last 25 years.

### **Definitions and Concepts**

A more expanded review of the variables believed to be associated with child adjustment to divorce will be provided in the conceptual framework section later in this chapter. However, several key terms and concepts must be defined at this point prior to any attempt to review the literature. These terms and concepts include divorce-parenting education, children of divorce, conflict tactics, conflicts of interest and intimate violence.

Divorce-parenting education refers to those courses that are endorsed or mandated by family courts and that are specifically designed for all divorcing parents who have one or more minor children (Johnston & Roseby, 1997).

Although, some courts do require children from divorcing families to attend child-oriented programs, divorce-parenting programs, as referred to in the literature,

and in this text, do not include courses that seek to teach or counsel children (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). Programs that are given in conjunction with mediation services are also excluded from what is considered divorce-parenting education. Additionally, divorce-parenting programs are considered as distinct from the more comprehensive multi-session courses that are now being offered in some jurisdictions for divorcing parents who have been identified as having high levels of conflict or who repeatedly require intervention from the courts to resolve their custody disputes (Kibler, Sanchez, & Baker-Jackson, 1994; McIsaac & Finn, 1999).

The phrase "children of divorce" as it is found in the divorce-parenting literature connotes any child under the age of 18 with biological parents who are in the process of or have already completed a divorce. This limited definition obviously excludes stepchildren or an adult child of divorced homes, and is employed due to the fact that the parents of these children are not legally required to attend divorce-parenting programs.

There is a considerable amount of research in the divorce literature regarding the impact of parental conflict on children. However, there remains very little clarity about what researchers actually mean by the term conflict. Few investigations have specified a definition of either marital or parental conflict. As noted by Emery (1982), this is perhaps due to the complexity of the variables and the considerable amount of controversy surrounding how best to define conflict, either in intact, separated or divorced families. Emery correctly states "three relevant aspects of the definition are the process of conflict (e.g., hitting, arguing,

avoidance), its content (e.g., sex, child rearing, money), and the length of time it lasts" (p. 312).

For the purposes of this study, the term "conflict" will generally be divided into two related, yet distinct constructs, conflict tactics and conflict of interest. However, due to its extensive use in the literature, the term conflict by itself will be used at different points in the text. In these instances, the word will be used to refer to both aspects of conflict (i.e., conflict tactics and conflict of interest).

Conflict tactics are defined as the specific overt actions or tactics employed by individuals within relationships to resolve their disagreements (Coser, 1956; Strauss, 1979). Conflict tactics therefore entail the actual "method used to advance one's own interest; that is, the means or tactics used to resolve differences" (Strauss, 1979, p. 76). Conflict tactics can be separated into destructive conflict tactics (e.g. shouting, name-calling, or excessive displays of anger), and constructive conflict tactics (e.g. reasoning or calm discussion).

The term "conflict of interest" is defined here as the inevitable differences of opinion or agendas that occur in every relationship (Strauss, 1979). Conflicts of interests are therefore resolved through the specific conflict tactics selected by individuals. Depending on the tactics chosen, conflicts of interest can be managed in ways that are either constructive or destructive to relationships with partners and other family members (Camera & Resnick, 1989; Straus, 1979).

From this perspective, intimate violence is seen as acutely destructive conflict tactics employed by an individual that disrespect the needs or feelings of other(s) and is in no way a certain outcome of conflicts of interest (Strauss,

Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). Intimate violence has been shown to provide a means for one partner to obtain power and control over the other individual in the relationship (Brygger & Edleson, 1987). The term intimate violence is preferred over domestic violence since it acknowledges the fact that violence can occur both before and after any separation or legal closure of the relationship (Dutton, 1988). Intimate violence includes emotional abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and physical abuse (Brygger & Edleson, 1987). These types of abuse will be defined in this study as they have been articulated by the Domestic Abuse Project of Minnesota or DAP (Brygger & Edleson, 1987). These definitions were selected due to their comprehensiveness and since they are stated in terms that are likely to be understood by most class attendees. DAP defines emotional abuse as "hurting the other's feelings by saying mean things and name calling" (DAP Men's Treatment Manual, 1993, p12). Psychological abuse equals "any threat to do bodily harm to a partner, to a child, to a family member, to a friend, to pets, or to oneself" (DAP Men's Treatment Manual, 1993, p12). Physical abuse is defined as "any forceful or violent action", and sexual abuse includes "any non-consenting sexual act or behavior, including any unwanted or disrespectful touch" (DAP Men's Treatment Manual, 1993, p13).

### **Content, Nature and Development of Programs**

The beginnings of divorce parenting programs can be largely traced to a court-mandated divorce parenting education course started in the middle 1970's in Johnson County, Kansas (Roeder-Esser, 1994). Since that time, and more

significantly within the last decade, programs have proliferated due largely to the support of judges and community organizations (Salem, 1995). Arguably, no single institute or agency can claim to have solely accelerated the creation of these programs. Nor has one organization established a universally employed format or content criterion.

There is considerable variation in the format of parenting programs for divorcing parents across the country, however most programs appear to have some common content themes. Table 1 identifies these common themes along with a summation of relevant information from divorce parenting articles found within the literature. Each article reviewed in Table 1 is described in terms of several pertinent characteristics including: court mandated status, participant fees, empirical research conducted, program length, instructional format, instructor's level of training, and instruments used to assess program effectiveness.

Table 1

## Summary of Divorce Parenting Program Components

Reference	Court-mandated	Participant Fees	Empirical Research Conducted	Program Length	Instructional Format	Instructor Level of Training	Instrument Used	Major Content Areas
Arbuthnot, J. & Gordon, D. A. (1996).	YES	NONE	YES	2 Hours	Skills - Based	Advanced Degree (master's or higher)	Structured interview & standardized Instrument	Danger of child exposure to parental conflict, Communication with former spouse, Needs of Children.
Arbuthnot, J., Kramer, K. M., & Gordon, D. A. (1997)	YES	No information	YES	2 Hours	Skills -Based	Advanced Degree (master's or higher)	Structured phone interview & standardized Instrument	Danger of child exposure to parental conflict, Communication with former spouse, Needs of Children.
Arbuthnot, J., Segal, D., Gordon, D. A., & Schneider, K. (1994).	Varied	Varied	YES	Varied	Skills-Based & Information-Based	Advanced Degree	No Information	Danger of child exposure to parental conflict, communication with former spouse, Needs of Children.
Bussey, M. (1996).	YES	No information	YES	4 hours	Information-based	Advanced Degree	Structured phone interview	Dimensions of the divorce process, Child reactions to divorce, parental roles in child adjustment, new family structures
Blaisure, K. R., & Geasler, M. J. (1996).	80% Court Mandated	80% Fees paid, 20% no fees,	Very limited empirical research conducted	Range from 1 hour to 8 hours	No information	Majority with advanced degree	Phone interview & non-standardized instrument	No information

Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Divorce Parenting Program Components

Reference	Court-mandated	Participant Fees	Empirical Research Conducted	Program Length	Instructional Format	Instructor Level of Training	Instrument Used	Major Content Areas
Braver, S. L., Salem, P., Pearson, J. & DeLuse, S. R. (1996).	56% court-mandated	No information	No information	No information	Mixture of Skills-based and psycho-educational, no percentages given	68% with advanced degree	Non-Standardized instrument	Benefits of parental cooperation, costs of parental conflict, typical post-divorce reactions of children.
Buehler, C., Betz, P., Ryan, C. M., Legg, B. H., & Trotter, B. B. (1992).	NO	No information	YES	Five 2-hour sessions	Informational and Skills-Based	Advanced Degree	Standardized instruments	Increasing parental awareness of ways to cooperate, common child responses to divorce & how parents can help, legal aspects of divorce.
Fischer, R. L. (1997)	Yes	Yes	Yes	4 hours	Information-based	Advanced Degree	Survey	Dimensions of the divorce process, Child reactions to divorce, parental roles in child adjustment, new family structures
Frieman, B. B., Garon, R., & Mandell, B. (1994).	Mixture of voluntary and court ordered	NONE	Yes	6 hours	Skills-based	Advanced Degree	Non-Standardized instrument	The impact of divorce on parents and children, parental measures to help children, & developing a cooperative relationship with former spouses.



Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Divorce Parenting Program Components

Reference	Court-mandated	Participant Fees	Empirical Research Conducted	Program Length	Instructional Format	Instructor Level of Training	Instrument Used	Major Content Areas
Geasler, M. J., & Blaisure, K. R. (1995).	35% of counties court-ordered, 42.5% invitation attendance	90% no fees 10% fees	Very limited empirical research conducted	Average 2 hours	Majority Information-based	Majority with advanced degree	Structured phone interview	Children's reactions and adjustments to divorce, helping parents understand needs of children, & promote healthy adjustment to divorce.
Geasler, M. J., & Blaisure, K. R. (1998).	67% mandated	69% paid by attendees	Very limited empirical research conducted	Average 4 hours	Majority Information-based	Majority with advanced degree	Expansive Non-Standardized instrument and follow-up phone contact	Children's reactions to divorce, parental responses to children, coparenting skills, stages of divorce, cooperative and parallel parenting
Harrell, J.D., & Beissinger, T.P. (1995).	YES	YES	No empirical research conducted	4 ½ hours	Information-based	Advanced degree	Non-Standardized instrument	Issues of impaired parenting, developmental needs of children, maladaptive responses of children to divorce, parental interventions with children.
Kramer, K.M., Arbuthnot, J., Gordon, D. A., Rousis & Hoza, J. (1998).	YES	NONE	YES	2 hours	Compares Information-based with skills-based	Advanced degree	Standardized instruments	Parenting skills necessary to help children with divorce, needs of children in divorcing families, how to minimize placing children in the middle of parental conflict.

Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Divorce Parenting Program Components

Reference	Court-mandated	Participant Fees	Empirical Research Conducted	Program Length	Instructional Format	Instructor Level of Training	Instrument Used	Major Content Areas
Kramer, J. P., & Washo, C. A. (1993).	YES	NONE	YES	No information given	Information - based	Advanced degree	Standardized instruments	Parenting skills necessary to help children with divorce, needs of children in divorcing families, how to minimize placing children in the middle of parental conflict.
Kurkowski, K. P., Gordon, D.A. & Arbuthnot. (1993).	NO	NONE	YES	No information given	Skills-based	No information given	Standardized instruments	Ways to avoid placing children into the middle of parental conflict.
Leek, D. F. (1992).	NO	YES	No empirical research conducted	9 hours	Family Systems and Cognitive Theory	Advanced degree	None	Creating a coparenting relationship, dysfunctional divorced families, how to avoid placing child into the middle of parental conflict.
Petersen, V. & Steinman, S.B. (1994).	YES	NONE	No empirical research conducted	2 ½ hours	Cognitive theory-base	Advanced degree	Non standardized Instruments	The adult's experience of divorce, the child's experience of divorce, building a coparenting relationship.

Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Divorce Parenting Program Components

Reference	Court-mandated	Participant Fees	Empirical Research Conducted	Program Length	Instructional Format	Instructor Level of Training	Instrument Used	Major Content Areas
Roeder-Esser, C. (1994).	YES	YES	No empirical research conducted	2 hours	Grief and Family Systems theories	Advanced degree	None	The grief process and how it relates to parents and children, "pain games" that divorcing families play, establishing a parental partnership, excluding child from parental conflict.
Stolberg, A. L. & Cullen, P. M. (1983).	NO	NONE	No empirical research conducted	Ten one hour sessions	Skills-based	Advanced degree	Non standardized instruments	Single-parent roles, mutual support, behavioral management approaches, children's reactions to divorce.
Schepard, A. (1993).	NO	NONE	No empirical research conducted	6 hours	Skills-based	Advanced degree	None	The legal process of divorce, children's reactions to divorce and how parents can help, parent's experience of the divorce process.

Program elements can be described in relation to their administrative characteristics and their instructional components.

### Administrative Characteristics

Prior to implementing a new divorce education program, counties, districts and states must consider several options regarding the administration of their program. Decisions must be made concerning court-mandated versus voluntary attendance, participant fees, instructor's level of training and program length.

Court Mandated versus Voluntary. Communities continue to debate the issue of requiring divorcing spouses with minor children to attend parenting programs. Some allege that such a mandate violates individual rights (Salem, 1995). The effectiveness of parents attending a course involuntarily has also been questioned (Walker, 1993). In response, others have noted that parents often fail to attend these courses when they are only offered voluntarily, and that courts already require parents to attend various other educational, evaluative, and therapeutic courses (Arbuthnot, Segal, Gordon, & Schneider, 1994). The number of jurisdictions mandating courses is increasing. One study which sought to solicit information from all 3,073 counties within the U.S. found that 70% of the 541 counties utilizing these programs were also mandating attendance or a judge determined attendance (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). A follow-up study by these same researchers found that approximately two-thirds of programs nationwide are mandated by state, county or local judicial authorities (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). Ten states have now moved to mandate divorce-parenting programs statewide. These states include Arizona, Connecticut,

Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Utah and Vermont (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). Braver, et al. (1996) found that 56% of 100 divorce education program providers attending a conference on these programs reported that their courses mandated attendance. It should be noted that most of the counties mandating attendance also allow for attendance waivers (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). Additionally, there is growing evidence that although some parents are initially resistant to being mandated to attend these courses, they frequently comment on their helpfulness (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996; Petersen & Steinman, 1994).

Participant Fees. The issue of program funding is frequently a controversial topic when attempting to create a new program. This dilemma appears to have been largely averted with divorce education programs by requiring participants to pay moderate attendance fees ranging from 15 to 50 dollars. The availability of fee waivers has undoubtedly aided in the avoidance of debate around this topic. Forty-two percent of the identified studies (8 of 19) did not appear to require these fees. Blaisure and Geasler (1995) found that 80% of counties nationwide and 90% of counties in Michigan were charging some participant fees. Neither percent arises from a representative sample. Further research is needed on participant fees for divorce parenting programs and the impact of fees to access.

Instructor's Level of Training. A multitude of mental health professions, as well as the legal profession, has been involved in the generation and provision of divorce parenting programs. Course providers include private and public mental

health organizations, family court service offices, independent parent education networks, colleges and universities, community-based agencies and others (Salem et al., 1996). These organizations vary with respect to the level of training and credentials required of course instructors. The bulk of programs require instructors to have a master's degree in a behavioral or mental health related field. However, Blaisure and Geasler (1995, 1996 & 1998) reported that the majority of instructors held higher degrees in either the behavioral or mental health fields. Braver et al. (1996) found that 68% of counties throughout the country required similar advanced degrees. Social workers, counselors and psychologists have been identified as the three most common disciplines of instructors (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). This apparent preference toward the mental health professions may represent an acknowledgement of the skills needed in teaching complex family information and the emotional impact that divorce and children's issues have on individuals.

Program Length. Significant diversity of program lengths was noted in the literature. Courses ranged from as brief as one hour to as long as several sessions. Blaisure and Geasler (1996) found a range from one to eight hours with two hours representing the typical length. These authors noted a similar pattern in Michigan where the average course duration was two hours (Geasler & Blaisure, 1995). The most common length of court-approved courses in Florida is four hours (Capsheaw & Whitworth, 1998).

### Instructional Characteristics

The instructional format and major content areas of divorce parenting programs logically play significant roles in their acceptance and effectiveness. These elements also reflect the larger theoretical foundations from which the programs have developed.

Major Content Areas. The content of divorce educational programs varies, however there are common curriculum elements present in nearly all programs. Most programs emphasize the impairing consequences of parental conflict on children along with the potential benefits to the child of cooperation between the former spouses (Braver et al., 1996; Geasler & Blaisure, 1995; Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). The negative outcomes for children when they are placed into the middle of the conflict or when they are used as transmitters of information between their parents is frequently addressed. Programs also almost universally highlight the responses of children at different developmental stages in their discussions of common reactions of children to divorce (Braver et al., 1996; Geasler & Blaisure, 1995; Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). Additionally, specific parental actions or behaviors to help their children, together with a review of benefits to children when both parents remain an active part of their lives, are commonly covered (Braver et al., 1996; Geasler & Blaisure, 1995).

Instructional Format. Kramer et al, (1998) suggest that divorce parenting program formats can generally be defined in relation to their instructional strategies. Courses which employ a predominantly didactic approach where emphasis is placed on communicating as much information to parents as

possible can be classified as "information based" (Kramer et al, 1998, p.12). Conversely, other programs utilize what these researchers have termed a "skills-based" strategy in which the focus is placed on changing behaviors and teaching parents new skills (Kramer et al, 1998, p 12).

The review of the articles regarding divorce-parenting programs reflects a higher utilization of the information-based strategy. Of the 20 articles in Table 1, five reported that this appears to be consistent with the trend of programs nationwide, however no available systematic research to date has sought to actually determine which instructional strategies are most commonly employed. The topic of instructional formats to include a discussion of the theories and respective values of information-based versus skills-based approaches is provided later in this chapter under conceptual framework.

#### Nature of a Typical Program

Geasler & Blaisure's (1998) comprehensive review of programs nationwide presents the characteristics of a typical current divorce-parenting program. They report that a standard program is likely community based, costs 30 dollars, lasts four hours, is court-mandated, consists of one session, and is presented by a mental health practitioner (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998). These researchers also note that courts are generally satisfied with the typical course.

#### **Critique of the Literature**

Research designed to identify the effectiveness of divorce parenting programs is in its infancy. Well-designed systematic studies are rare. The majority of published articles regarding these programs can generally be



characterized as program descriptions. These descriptions generally seek to only provide information about their specific program, and do not include any sampling or research design strategies. Such articles can be classified as "technology" as defined by Klein and Bloom (1994). Although such program descriptions are useful as course examples, and may increase the overall popularity of divorce education programs, simply describing the course does not provide data to evaluate effectiveness. Divorce parenting programs may lose their current level of popularity if effectiveness research is not generated.

Empirical research on divorce parenting programs is sparse, but not nonexistent. Empirical is defined here as "planned actions to observe and measure social events in laboratories, clinics, or community settings, what would be termed "research" or "evaluation" in the current literature" (Klein and Bloom, 1994, p.422). This definition is inclusive of research that has historically been referred to as "quantitative" and those that have been termed "qualitative". Given this broad definition, all 20 divorce-parenting articles reviewed can be classified as empirical. However, 11 of these 20 articles simply describe a specific divorce parenting class or summarize components of multiple programs. These articles are helpful in understanding what is provided in divorce-parenting classes, yet they do not include any investigation into program effectiveness or impact.

A methodological summary of the nine research-focused studies is provided in Appendix A. The 11 program description articles were excluded from this more detailed examination due to their lack of efforts to investigate their impact or effectiveness. A closer examination and critique of the nine research

based divorce-parenting studies appears warranted given the only developing nature of divorce-parenting research and its insufficient "proven" empirical basis. These studies can be evaluated in relation to their research variables and design, sampling strategies, data analysis and measurement instruments.

#### Research Variables, Design & Results

A mixture of pre-experimental and quasi-experimental designs (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) can be identified in the literature. Kramer and Washo (1993), conducted one of the first empirically grounded investigations of Children's First, a popular program used predominately in the Midwest. Employing a quasi-experimental design containing a demographically similar comparison group, these researchers evaluated whether parents can increase their awareness of how their own behaviors can have a negative impact on children. Subjects were measured at three different times, once before the class, just after the class, and a third time three months later. This design appears appropriate for the analysis since it allowed for the comparison of multiple means over time. Results showed parents found the program helpful. However, the treatment group's actual behaviors and attitudes regarding their children's adjustment did not change when compared to the comparison group. Parents experiencing a high level of conflict with their former spouses did demonstrate improvements in decreasing the frequency of placing children into the parental conflict. The researchers analyzed the data with one-way analysis of variance and the results were statistically significant in the hypothesized direction.

Kramer et al. (1998) compared the impact of skills-based versus information-based education programs on parental communication and domestic violence. Employing a quasi-experimental design, with one comparison group and two treatment groups, these researchers measured variables from three months prior to the program to three months after the program. The variables measured included parental communication, domestic violence, parent conflict, child exposure to conflict, child behavior problems, parenting skills, parent's reactions to the class, and parental knowledge of information. Both treatment groups had similar improvements in parental communication with the skills-based group having an effect size (ES) of .61 and the information-based ES as .64. ES is calculated here as the difference between means of the experimental group and the comparison group divided by the pooled standard deviation of both groups (Kazdin, 1994, p.31). Parent knowledge almost improved equally with the skills-based group having an ES of .68 and the information-based ES as .67. The skills-based group was slightly better at reducing child exposure to conflict (ES = .62) versus the information-based (ES = .55). None of the three groups had a significant effect on domestic violence (Kramer et al., 1998). This application of a multi-faceted quasi-experimental design reflects appropriate attention to the complexity of divorce phenomena.

Utilizing a quasi-experimental design with a treatment group, and a comparison group, Arbuthnot and Gordon (1996) conducted a six-month outcome evaluation of a court-mandated divorce education course. Results confirmed the researcher's hypothesis that the program could decrease child

exposure to parental conflict. Parents reported that the class improved their ability to communicate with their child's other parent. They also stated that the course helped them to reduce the frequency with which children were placed in the middle of parental conflict. These results were consistently evident at the six-month follow-up measure. Analysis of the data was conducted with one-way analysis of variance and the results were statistically significant in the hypothesized direction.

Buehler, Betz, Ryan, Legg and Trotter (1992) utilized an experimental design employing a treatment group and a control group in their investigation of an expansive multi-session voluntary program for divorcing parents in Tennessee. Both groups were measured at three points, before, during, and at four months after, treatment. Findings indicated that the treatment group was satisfied with the program, however the two groups did not differ in their level of parental competition, child-rearing conflict or cooperation.

Kurkowski, Gordon, and Arbuthnot (1993) hypothesized that divorced parents who received information regarding the negative impact of placing their high-school age child in the middle of their conflict would decrease this behavior in contrast to demographically similar control groups who did not receive this information. Children of parents from all three groups completed a questionnaire at the time of the distribution of information to the intervention group, and again at 4-8 weeks later. Results found no significant differences (at  $p < .10$ ) between the groups on the initial measure. However, when compared to the two control groups, children from the group of parents receiving the information reported

fewer episodes of being caught in the middle of their parent's arguments ( $ES = .71$ ). The researchers analyzed the data with one-way analysis of variance and the results were statistically significant in the hypothesized direction.

One proposed measure of the effectiveness of divorce parenting classes is post-decree litigation or relitigation. Some parents engaged in conflict turn to the courts to resolve their ongoing discord. Arbuthnot, Kramer, and Gordon (1997) tested whether parents who attended a 2-hour skills-based divorce parenting class would have a lower rate of relitigation compared to a demographically similar group of parents who received no intervention. Information regarding relitigation was procured over a 24 and 27 month period after course attendance. Additionally, phone interviews were conducted with parents six months after course completion. Parents who did not attend the course had an average of relitigation more than twice as high (3.74 filings versus 1.61 filings) as the treatment group.

The literature contains an example of a pre-experimental design conducted by social workers. Frieman, Garon, & Mandel (1994) examined divorce-parenting programs provided at the Children of Separation and Divorce Center (C.O.S.D.) in Maryland. Parents completed a questionnaire before the seminar started and after it was over. Attendees reported that the program increased their knowledge regarding the effects of divorce on children, how children cope with divorce, and improved their understanding of proactive steps to help their children cope with divorce. Although these findings are encouraging, and represent a solid exploratory effort by social workers to

research these programs, their findings should be considered with some caution due to the pre-experimental design. Such a design does not control for other possible variables of divorce. The design allows for the possible interaction of selection maturation, and testing, resulting in clear threats to the study's internal validity. Additionally, the design does not manage the potential interaction of the testing and intervention.

Fischer (1997) employed a systematic survey design to elicit the perceptions of judges who refer parents to Children Cope With Divorce, a popular divorce parenting program used nationwide. Judges were asked to rate the effectiveness of the program in addressing parental conflict and other related factors. Results showed that over 95% of the sampled judges assess the program as valuable in lessening the negative effects of divorce on children and benefiting families. Additionally, almost 80% of the judges believed the program reduced parental relitigation and increased parent's ability to agree on custody arrangements. Although such findings clearly indicate positive perceptions of the effectiveness of a prominent program, the survey design only reports these judges' opinions, not actual data to support their beliefs.

Bussey (1996) attempted a modest ethnographic investigation of Children Cope With Divorce. She conducted in-depth and comprehensive interviews with a small number of parents (i.e., six) three years after they had been mandated to attend this divorce-parenting program. Parents were asked open-ended and probing questions regarding "their initial feelings about attending, what they remembered of the seminar itself, both the formal presentation and the context

(audience participation, etc.), assessment of its impact on themselves and their children, and their evaluation of the worth of the program" (Bussey, 1996, p.138). Themes emerging from the interviews reflected that these parents believed the program had helped them to understand the impact that their divorce had on their children's emotions and their need to exclude children from exposure to or involvement in parental conflict.

### Sampling Strategies

Studies on the effectiveness of divorce parenting programs almost universally utilize purposive samples comprised of parents who attend a program. This use of non-probability samples is not optimal, however it is reasonable given the limitations of working with primarily court-mandated interventions.

The issue of greater concern here relates to the sampling strategy of using demographically similar comparison groups. Researchers of these programs are often required to solicit comparison samples from different geographical areas in order to find parents who are not required to attend these programs. Five of the nine identified empirical studies employ this comparison group strategy (See Appendix A). The demographic makeup of the samples is primarily Caucasian and middle-class. This clearly limits some of the generalizability of findings to ethnic or racial minority groups. Of additional concern is the question of similarity between treatment groups and the comparison groups with respect to the variables of interest. All five studies utilizing comparison groups only match the groups on general demographic characteristics such as race, socioeconomic

status, age, education, number of children, and number of months separated from former spouse. None of these studies report efforts to match the treatment and comparison groups on possible predictive variables such as participation in mediation services, occurrence of a domestic violence incident or the amount of contact between a child and their non-resident parent. This flaw is likely due to the difficulty of obtaining such information from samples prior to initiating a study. It also highlights some of the dilemmas of doing research in divorce parenting education.

### Measurement Instruments

The development of viable instruments to measure the effectiveness of these programs is still in the initial stages. The majority of program description articles discussed earlier rely heavily on self-report measures, and utilize what can be best described as consumer-focused evaluation questionnaires. Only six of the twenty studies identified in Table 1 employed standardized measures. Most of these studies simply report parent testimonials as evidence of their effectiveness.

In contrast, the most grounded work to date in creating viable outcome measures appears to have been generated by researchers at Ohio University, who appear to be at the forefront in attempting to measure the actual effectiveness of divorce education programs. Arbuthnot and Gordon (1996) utilized both a brief post-class evaluation, and a 6-month follow-up phone interview. Each subject's awareness of their child's perspectives and exposure to conflict were measured with 5 point scales. The concepts of sensitivity to



children's needs, effectiveness of skills training, and putting children in the middle, were assessed via open ended brief scenario response questions during the phone interview. Open-ended phone interview questions also identified self-reported behaviors and child adjustment issues. This combination of structured interview and written post-class assessments appears viable, however the authors do not discuss how the results from the two tools were integrated. In addition, no specification of instrument validity (i.e., prior applications or testing with focus groups) is provided. The study depends heavily on self-reported behaviors, however the authors argue that utilization of the control group addresses this issue.

Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis & Hoza (1998) applied multiple measures, including some instruments that were previously used in divorce education research and others created for their project. All measures utilized Likert-type scales to assess the variables of interest (i.e., domestic violence, parental communication, parental conflict, child exposure to conflict, child behavior problems, parent knowledge of information, parenting skills and parent's reactions to the program). These tools, in order to include the newly developed ones, were tested multiple times prior to their utilization on this project. Reliabilities for the employed instruments ranged from  $\alpha = .75$  to  $.95$ . This usage of multiple previously tested measures and the number of varied instruments lend credibility to the study's validity and reliability. Future studies will require further replications with these instruments. Pilot work recently completed in Florida (Capshaw, Whitworth, & Abell, 2000) describes the initial

validation of a standardized instrument, with a new tool capturing divorce as loss, permanency of parental role, developmental stages, communicating with children, abuse and visitation.

#### Summary of the Current State of Divorce-Parenting Research

Divorce parenting programs nationwide almost universally seek to teach parents about the emotional impact of divorce on their children along with increasing their awareness of the costs to children of ongoing parental conflict. Issues requiring attention prior to creating these programs include court-mandated versus voluntary attendance, participant fees, instructor's level of training, program length, instructional format and major content curriculum topics. The makeup of a typical program has also been identified.

Limited research regarding the effectiveness of divorce parenting programs has been reported. Results from initial empirical investigations indicate that these courses have little if no impact on the actual level of conflict between the parents. However, there is some evidence that these courses may improve parental communication, decrease some of the exposure of children to parental conflict, and reduce the frequency of parents returning to the courts to resolve their disputes regarding child related issues.

Research into the effectiveness of divorce-parenting classes remains hampered by the general refusal of judges to excuse some parents from attending the program to allow them to be part of a control group. Some researchers have sought to avoid this dilemma by finding demographically similar comparison groups or wait-list groups. This option has become generally

unfeasible due to an increasing majority of jurisdictions which now mandate these courses, and their refusal of delaying program attendance for the purpose of conducting research, thereby precluding the use of wait-list or cohort groups.

Comparison groups, as they are used in five of the nine identified empirical studies, also highlight a clear potential methodological problem inherent in using nonequivalent control group designs (Cook & Campbell, 1979). By obtaining comparability between treatment and nonequivalent control groups only on several general demographic characteristics and not on variables that are believed to affect the dependent variables, these studies fail to control for the potential effect of other factors on the variables of interest. Variables such as participation in mediation services or occurrence of a domestic violence incident are understandably difficult to gauge, yet they must be accounted for in all groups if the researcher is making the claim that all groups are similar. This methodological problem has been described as the potential interaction between selection and history, or local history (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Local history is "events other than the treatment which affect the experimental group but not the control group. Or vice versa" (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p.105). By failing to account for or measure these variables in either the treatment or control group prior to any intervention, the researcher is also limited to lower powered statistical tests such as ANOVA. In contrast, analysis of covariance or ANCOVA with multiple covariates allows for the measuring of such predictive variables and thereby can decrease bias in estimating the treatment effects (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Obtaining comparability between treatment and no treatment groups has been and will likely continue to be an ongoing methodological impediment to systematic investigations of divorce-parenting education. It remains difficult to match the groups on a specific set of known demographic characteristics that will predict the variables of interests. Even if there was a clear consensus within the literature regarding what these demographic characteristics are, obtaining access to no-treatment subjects with those particular characteristics continues to be acutely difficult. Judges who have been shown to almost universally endorse divorce parenting programs (Fischer, 1997) are hesitant to withhold any parents from participating in a class since they believe these courses are an effective relitigation prevention program.

This problem is particularly relevant for the current study since it was conducted in the state of Florida where all divorcing parents are now mandated to attend a divorce-parenting course. The researcher would have been required to go out of the state to obtain such a no-treatment sample. If that had been done, the question of which demographic characteristics to measure would still be problematic. Where prior research (i.e., Kramer, 1998) has addressed the no-treatment control condition, matching to treatment subjects has typically been only on gross demographic indicators such as gender, SES or race. These variables do not include the hypothesized predictors considered elsewhere in this study (i.e., prior history of intimate violence, and prior participation in mediation services). These methodological issues, including the limited success of previous studies attempting to employ no-treatment groups, and the substantial

increase in costs that would have been incurred in seeking such a group from out of the state, contributed to the decision not to include a no-treatment condition in the design of the current study.

Although there is some evidence indicating that skills-based courses are more optimal, substantive questions still remain regarding what instructional format may be most effective in producing desired outcomes. In particular, it is unclear if skills-based courses, emanating from cognitive-behavioral theory, are more effective than information-based programs that are almost strictly based on cognitive theory. Only one study of divorce-parenting (Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis & Hoza, 1998) has sought to answer this question. The question of what impact divorce-parenting programs may have on intimate violence between divorcing parents also remains unanswered.

A more pointed critique of Kramer et al.'s (1998) study is provided near the end of this chapter. However, a study replicating numerous elements of the research conducted by those researchers, that also improves on the investigation by applying more comprehensive instruments and utilizes more sensitive data analysis, seems indicated. There appears to be value in conducting a randomized study of two distinct divorce-parenting classes where the researcher is able to measure each group's scores on several likely impacting covariates, such as participation in mediation and occurrence of intimate violence, prior to the onset of any intervention.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual impetus for the creation and development of divorce-parenting education is the belief that children are harmed by ongoing parental conflict and by parental behaviors that reflect a lack of awareness about their children's needs resulting from divorce. The case is made that if parents can be sensitized to both the impairing consequences of their open conflict with each other, and to the unique needs of their children during and after the divorce process, they will act to change their behaviors. Changes in parental behaviors are believed, to in turn result in improvements in their children's adjustment to divorce. Implicit in such a conceptual framework are multiple theoretical assumptions and beliefs reflecting distinct perspectives about how families and individuals function, how they change and how they learn. The following section seeks to identify and examine these perceptions to include an investigation of the principal explanatory theories employed in such a framework (i.e., Conflict Theory, Cognitive theory, and Cognitive-Behavioral Theory).

Prior to reviewing and discussing the roles of these theories in such a framework, the text will first consider what is known about the impact of divorce on children. It is also imperative that any conceptual framework for the study first critique research about the linkages between parental behaviors and child adjustment to divorce to include a review of the other factors believed to be associated with post-divorce impairments in children. After a summary of research regarding the impact of divorce on children, the following text subsequently breaks down the roles of specific variables believed to be

associated with child adjustment to divorce. They include the roles of parental conflict, marital status, the level and nature of parental conflict, child gender, child age, and buffers/mediators. This is followed by a brief discussion of two variables, participation in mediation and a history of intimate violence, that have been shown in the literature to impact parent interaction during the divorce process. This section closes with an explication of the study's hypotheses.

### Impact of Divorce on Children

Individual children arguably vary in their responses, however multiple foundational studies into the impact of divorce on children found that children of divorce experience more difficulties when compared to children from intact families (Amato & Keith, 1991; Demo & Acock, 1988; Kelly, 1993; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). In their examination of children one year after divorce, Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1977) found that children from divorced homes were less affectionate and demonstrated more disobedient, demanding, and aggressive behaviors. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) evaluated children five years after their parent's divorce. One third of the children in the study were identified as experiencing some psychological difficulties related to the divorce while another third were described as seriously disturbed. A follow-up study five years later found that many of these children were still dealing with emotional difficulties related to the divorce (Wallerstein, 1985). Some research has also shown that these children demonstrate lower cognitive and social competence (Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987).

Children of divorce have been found to experience both overt and covert problems. Kelly's (1993) analysis of the research into the impact of divorce on children concluded that multiple reliable studies had shown that when compared to children who had not experienced divorce, children of divorce consistently demonstrate a high level of overt or "externalized behaviors" (p. 30). Externalized behaviors included aggression, antisocial problems, impulsive actions, difficulties in peer relationships, less compliance with authority and school behavior problems. Boys were found to have these difficulties more often than girls do. These children also regularly have lower math, reading and I.Q. scores (Kelly, 1993).

Kelly (1993) reported that there was no clear evidence in the literature on whether or not children of divorce experience more "internalized behaviors" (i.e., anxiety, withdrawal, and depression) when compared to other children. However, some researchers have documented some long-term internalized difficulties. Johnson, Wilkinson and McNeil (1995) concluded that divorce hinders the attainment of developmental tasks of young adulthood. They found that when children from divorced homes reach adulthood they regularly demonstrate difficulty in differentiating from their family of origin and forming intimate peer relationships (Johnson et al., 1995).

In perhaps the most extensive examination of research on the impact of divorce on children, Amato and Keith (1991) sought to summarize the findings of empirical research on this topic. Their meta-analysis of 92 studies focusing on the impact of divorce on children found consistent documentation that parental



divorce has been shown to lower the well being of children. Children from divorced parents scored steadily lower on multiple measures of behavioral functioning and emotional adjustment when compared to children from intact families.

Although there appears to be a correlation between divorce and child adjustment, it should be noted that actual differences between children of divorce and children from intact families have been comparatively minimal. Kelly (1993) noted that "the magnitude of the differences between the two groups (divorced versus intact), while significant, are consistently quite small" (p. 30). Additionally, the median effect size for the lower scores on multiple measures found by Amato and Keith was only .14 of a standard deviation. Such a lack of a strong empirical relationship between divorce and impaired child adjustment has led Amato and Keith, Kelly and numerous other researchers and theorists to investigate other possible related or intervening variables that may be impacting children. Of these factors, most of which are reviewed below, parental conflict has been increasingly linked to poor child adjustment.

#### The Role of Parental Conflict

The task of identifying and understanding the complex variables that precipitate impairments for some children of divorce has proven to be a difficult. Complicating the question further is the fact that families are not a fixed concrete entity which can be discontinued with a legal divorce decree or by one individual leaving a household. More realistically, these families remain in many ways an ongoing system that continues to impact its members. Parental and former

spousal subsystems continue to exist, necessitating the clarification of boundaries and rules (Durst, Wedemeyer, & Zurcher, 1985). Additionally, spouses continue to interact with varying degrees of cooperation and conflict (Ahrons, 1981).

The presence of parental conflict has been increasingly linked with actual post-divorce child adjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hess & Camera, 1979; Raske & Raske, 1979). Initial foundational studies of children established that they experience psychological distress when repeatedly exposed to ongoing parental conflict (Hetherington, 1979; Jacobson, 1978; Rosen, 1977; Rosen, 1979, Wallerstein & Kelly, 1979). Peck (1989) found a strong correlation between the quality of post-divorce parental relationships and child adjustment.

Amato and Keith (1991) report there is compelling information supporting this conflict explanation. They concluded that parental divorce has been shown to lower the well being of children. Similar results have been reported by others (Emery, 1982; Farber, Primavera, and Fellner, 1981). Wallerstein (1991) noted that long-term impairments to children appear related to the ability of their parents to resolve conflicts of interest. Johnson et al. (1995) determined that conflict continues to harm children's psychosocial and relational functioning several years after the end of their parent's divorce.

### The Role of Marital Status

Some researchers are now attempting to delineate the precise connections between divorce, violence, and their impact on children. More specifically, the actual function of parental marital status is being questioned.

There is growing information to support the belief that divorce is not as important as the actual level of destructive conflict tactics or child exposure to conflict between the parents. Amato and Keith (1991) noted in their comprehensive examination of the research that there is consistent evidence "that children in intact families marked by high levels of interparental conflict reveal problems comparable to those children in divorced families" (p 40.). The expansive analysis completed by Kelly (1993) found that parental conflict was more consistently related to child poor self-esteem and depression than parental marital status. Such findings were in agreement with findings by earlier investigators. In their examination of a national sample of 1,400 children ages 12 to 16, Peterson and Zill (1986) discovered that persistent marital conflict was as highly correlated with negative child outcomes as marital disruption. Similar findings have been reported in other studies with adolescents (Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody; 1987) and young adults (Johnson et al; 1995).

An empirical consensus appears to be forming around the conclusion that children from intact and divorced families are just as, or more, universally harmed by the parental conflict rather than whether or not their parents are married. If this is the case, then it can also be hypothesized that much of what impairs children from divorce can be seen before any parental separation. An examination of two large-scale longitudinal studies, one conducted in England and the other in the United States, sought to focus on the functioning of children before any parental separation (Cherlin, Furtsenberg, Chase-Lansdale, Kiernan, Robins, Morrison, & Teitler, 1991). A factor analysis of the data found that the

negative effects of divorce decreased by half in the British study, and 6% in the U.S. study, when the control variable of marital conflict was included. The article does not mention potential sources for the differences seen between the British and U.S. children.

### The Role of Destructive Conflict Tactics and Child Exposure to Parental Conflict

With the relationship between parental conflict and child impairment appearing to be sufficiently established, researchers have now begun to attempt to isolate the specific impairing elements of parental conflict. Several studies have sought to discover the actual nature and level of conflict that harms children. One of the earliest efforts in this direction was attempted by Johnston, Gonzales, and Campbell (1987). In their two and one half-year study of 56 children from 4 to 12 years old, these researchers discovered that the degree of child exposure to or involvement in the parental dispute was associated with increased child behavior problems. These findings mirrored an earlier examination, which noted that actual child involvement in parental altercations predicted the severity and frequency of child difficulties (Johnston, Campbell, & Meyers, 1985). Camera and Resnick (1989) similarly found that children had more behavioral difficulties and poorer relationships with both parents when their mothers and fathers employed verbal attack tactics to resolve conflicts of interest.

A more recent longitudinal study employing teacher evaluations of 56 intact families and actual observations of family interactions, concluded that when parents use aggressive conflict resolution styles in front of their children,

those children exhibit more internalized and externalized behavior problems in the classroom (Fainsilberger-Katz & Gottman; 1993). Radovanovic (1993) noted similar impairments when children are exposed to aggressive parental conflict resolution tactics in her examination of 52 families who were disputing custody issues. Kelly (1993) summarized the findings from several investigations regarding the actual impairing nature of parental conflict in her conclusion that "it appears that, rather than discord per se, it is the manner in which parental conflict is expressed that may affect children's adjustment.....high interparental discord has been found to be related to the child feeling caught in the middle, and this experience of feeling caught was related to adjustment" (page 35).

If we conclude that not only parental conflict, but the level of child exposure to and the severity of that conflict are the most impairing elements of parental disputes, then we can also theorize that when parents are able to cooperate, reduce or decrease child exposure to destructive parental conflict tactics, their children exhibit fewer divorce adjustment problems. Several studies have sought to investigate the impact of parental cooperation. Some evidence has shown that children from cooperative parental settings have fewer behavioral difficulties, and that they adjust better to divorce (Camara & Resnick, 1989; Hess & Camara, 1979; Jacobsen, 1978; Luepnitz, 1986).

#### The Role of Child Gender

There is a considerable amount of research supporting the conclusion that boys more than girls experience higher levels of "externalized behaviors" (i.e., impulsive, aggressive and antisocial behaviors (Camera & Resnick, 1988;

Hetherington et al., 1985; Peterson & Zill, 1986; Zill, 1983). Kelly (1993) has pointed out that this may be due in part to the fact that boys generally to express their feeling through externalized behaviors more than girls. In fact, girls from divorcing homes have been shown to more frequently express their difficulties through "internalized behaviors" such as depression and withdrawal (Peterson & Zill, 1986).

Kramer (1997) notes that the issue is complicated further by findings that indicate that the externalized behaviors of boys often increase when they live with their unmarried mothers. Citing empirical studies by Hetherington et al. (1985) and Zaslow (1988, 1989), Kramer (1997) highlights information indicating that boys express less internalized behaviors when they live primarily with their father or their remarried mother. Conversely, girls display increased internalized or externalized behaviors when they live with their unmarried fathers versus with their mothers or remarried fathers (Kramer, 1997). These findings highlight the need for researchers to identify a child's gender and primary residence when drawing conclusions about their adjustment to divorce.

An additional dilemma for researchers is that the externalized behaviors more frequently associated with boys are usually easier to observe or recognize thereby precipitating easier study and measurement. Conversely, internalized behaviors are generally more difficult to observe and not as amenable to investigation. Researchers seeking to gauge child post-divorce adjustment equally for both boys and girls should therefore utilize instruments that

concurrently measure, and have the same probability of detecting, both externalized and internalized behaviors.

### The Role of Child Age

Numerous researchers have found evidence that the age of the child at the time of the parent's separation and divorce is an important factor in predicting child adjustment (Hetherington et al, 1985; Johnson, Wilkinson, & Mcneil, 1995; Kelly, 1993 ). Such findings appear consistent with a developmental understanding of child adaptation which perceives children as having different cognitive, emotional and physical abilities based somewhat on age (Johnston & Roseby, 1997). Common behaviors seen in preschool age children as they attempt to adjust include blaming themselves for the divorce, concern about an absent parent, or regression to an earlier level of maturity (Johnston & Roseby, 1997; Wallerstein, 1985). Elementary age children often experience some somatic complaints, depression and anger which is generally vented toward custodial parents, caretakers, and teachers (Johnston & Roseby, 1997; Wallerstein, 1985). Junior high and high school age children regularly align with one parent over the other while expressing acute anger with extensive blame toward one or both parents (Johnston & Roseby, 1997; Wallerstein, 1985).

There in fact may be an interaction effect between age and gender in response to divorce. Some teenage girls may begin to demonstrate some adjustment difficulties after they had shown no previous problems and when the divorce may have occurred several years earlier (Johnson, Wilkinson, & Mcneil,

1995; Wallerstein, 1985). Hetherington and associates (1985) also found that boys behavior problems tend to decrease with age while girls often increase.

### The Role of Buffers and Mediating Factors

Given the growing amount of evidence implicating child exposure to ongoing parental conflict as a major determinant in child adjustment, it is surprising that only limited research has been done regarding what elements may protect children from the impact of these factors. This issue is particularly relevant to any discussion of potential interventions (i.e., divorce parenting classes) since such courses purport to advise parents on how to decrease the impact of divorce on their children.

In the most thorough empirical examination of the role of mediating factors to date, Fainsilber-Katz and Gottman (1997) sought to identify and evaluate potential child buffers to the effects of marital conflict and dissolution. Behaviors such as the parental warmth, parental praise and awareness of their child's emotional needs were all correlated at the (.01) level with better child outcomes. Additionally, child intelligence was found to have protective components for children. These findings are notable due to the fact that they speak to the issue of how to intervene in these families. They also build upon earlier studies that linked poor child adjustment to impairments in the parent-child relationship (Fauber, Forehand, Thomas, & Wierson, 1990; Peterson & Zill, 1986).

### Summary of Variables Impacting Child Adjustment

There appears to be substantive evidence to support the conclusion that children are harmed by divorce. However, it is further evident that one of the



primary impairing factors of divorce is parental conflict. Children are particularly hurt when parents use aggressive attacking styles to resolve conflict or when the child is in any way placed into the middle of the conflict. Impairments are generally associated with child exposure and involvement in the parental dispute. These parental behaviors not only harm the child; they also act to damage the invaluable relationship between parent and child. There appear to be differences between how boys and girls respond to their parent's divorce depending to some degree on the child's age and their residential arrangements. Supportive and emotionally empathetic parent-child relationships have been shown to buffer children from some, but not all of the negative impact of divorce and parental conflict.

These findings highlight the need for interventions that focus on reducing this conflict. Nearly all divorce-parenting programs surveyed nationwide aspire to teach parents about the costs of ongoing parental conflict to children versus the benefits of cooperation (Braver et al, 1996). The assumption underlying such interventions is that if parents are sensitized to the impact that ongoing conflict with their former spouses has on their child, then they will attempt to cooperate more with each other or at a minimum strive to reduce their child's exposure to the conflict. The soundness of this assumption has been questioned by some who argue that it is unreasonable to expect such a high level of cooperation from divorced parents (Walker, 1993). Others allege that these programs may be promising more than can be done within a brief intervention (Salem et al., 1996).

These concerns, along with the need for the creation of a strong empirical basis, must be considered in any examination of divorce parenting education programs. Of additional concern is the general lack of reporting of effect sizes in the literature. This fact has implications regarding the claims made regarding post-divorce family relationship made in the literature. In spite of these precautions, it does appear that elements of a viable conceptual justification for divorce-parenting programs have been formulated.

### Effects of Mediation and History of Intimate Violence

Since divorce-parenting classes seek to improve the adjustment of children to divorce through an educational intervention provided to their parents, it is imperative to also review the primary variables that are believed to effect parent interactions. Among the various relational factors that have been implicated as likely affecting the interactions between divorcing parents, the two most commonly identified ones in the literature are a history of intimate violence and parental participation in mediation. These two factors have been shown to predict several components of parental relations during the divorce process to include, communication, conflicts of interest, intimate violence and destructive conflict tactics. A brief review of what is known about the relationships between these variables is provided here.

### Parental Participation in Mediation

Emerging in the late 1970's as alternative to the adversarial litigation process, divorce mediation has rapidly expanded in the two decades since its creation (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997). Divorce mediation has been promoted as

an option for partners who wish "to end their marriage with minimal legal procedures, cost, and hostility, and at the same time with maximum personal input and control over agreements about property settlement and child care taking arrangement" (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997, p. 93-94). In spite of the presence of high levels of anger and hostility between the parties, participants regularly report that divorce mediation provided them with a better option to seek to resolve their differences versus the divorce-litigation process (Erickson & Mcknight-Erickson, 1988).

Initial investigations into the benefits of divorce mediation found that in contrast to the litigation process, mediation "empowered negotiating parties, giving the parties the opportunity to air grievances that are seldom addressed in litigation, helping parents focus on the needs of children, limiting damage to parent's relationships, and developing agreements" (Newmark, Harrell & Salem, 1995, p.30). Kelly (1996) conducted a systematic research synthesis of studies examining the effects of divorce mediation, to include its impact on parental interaction variables. She concluded that divorce mediation had been shown to be associated with brief, yet usually short-term improvements in parental communication and cooperation (Kelly, 1996). She describes several systematic investigations of divorce mediation employing random assignment of subjects (i.e., Emery, 1994; Kelly, 1991; & Kelly, 1993). These researchers found that when compared to litigating parents, divorce mediation parents demonstrated lower levels of parental conflict and increased cooperation both during the divorce process and up to two years post-divorce (Kelly, 1996).

In spite of growing empirical evidence reflecting the benefits of divorce mediation, it does appear that these services are not for everyone. A growing number of researchers and practitioners assert that divorce mediation is not appropriate in cases where intimate violence has occurred (Hart, 1984; Sun & Woods, 1989). Kelly (1996) reports that only limited research has been done on the impact of divorce mediation on intimate violence, yet she points out that this is an area requiring future investigation.

### History of Intimate Violence

The effects of a history of intimate violence within a relationship on later parental interaction is likely best understood within the context of the "cycle of violence" as defined by Walker (1979). Walker (1979) discovered that intimate violence within partner relationships frequently occurs as part of an escalating pattern during which the abuse almost always increases in intensity and severity. She found three separate phases existing within this "cycle of violence". During the first phase, tension builds between the partners as they ignore or inappropriately attempt to deal with conflict of interest. The second phase is the actual violence incident, which is then followed by the final phase that been described as the "remorse" period during which time the perpetrator, usually the husband, appears contrite in seeking to reconcile with his partner (Walker, 1979).

The longer a couple continues functioning as part of this cycle the more escalated and severe the violence becomes. Women attempting to leave relationships at this point are often most at risk for extreme violence and are frequently harassed by their former partners (Edelson, Eisekovitz, Guttman &

Sela-Amit, 1991, Walker, 1991). Investigations specifically examining divorcing couples have noted this escalation of abuse both during and after the divorce process (Harlow, 1991; Sun & Woods, 1989).

Specific empirical research attempting to confirm Walker's findings have been limited. Strauss and Hotelling (1980) employed a retrospective self-report survey design with a nationwide sample of 2,143 married individuals to identify some of the same patterns as noted by Walker. However, given what is already understood about the escalation of intimate violence over time, it can be concluded that a history of intimate violence is regularly associated with the recurrence of violence within that relationship even though they may be in the divorce process. Moreover, it can be theorized that in addition to the reoccurrence of violence, the escalation of interactional difficulties will also occur in other aspects of the parent's relationship. Therefore, a history of intimate violence is likely associated with impairments in parental communication and with increases in conflicts of interest, and the use of destructive conflict tactics.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The primary impetus for the creation of divorce-parenting education programs has arisen from a larger community concern regarding the impact of divorce on children. Community political forces in combination with social service and mental health entities have worked to develop these courses. Hence, divorce-parenting classes have not typically developed from explicitly identified theoretical bases. However, it is clear upon examination that these programs implicitly employ several central theories. The following sections briefly outline

these theoretical underpinnings to highlight how such programs attempt to intervene with divorcing parents. Conflict Theory, Cognitive theory, and Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment are all reviewed and discussed.

### Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, as defined by Strauss and Gelles (1990) identifies conflicts of interest as inevitable elements of all human contact. From this perspective, violence is seen as distinct from conflicts of interest, and is in no way a certain outcome of conflict (Strauss, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). Interventions based on Conflict Theory emphasize managing conflict in a manner that considers the needs of all the individuals or groups involved in the conflict. Conflict resolution tactics which disrespect the needs of others are seen as ineffective, while those that acknowledge the feelings and needs of the other party are described as useful in goal attainment. Reasoning and negotiation are perceived as the primary mechanisms or tactics through which conflict is resolved. If conflict is suppressed, according to these conflict theorists, stagnation and failure to adjust to changes will result in subsequently eroding any sense of solidarity within the relationship(s) (Strauss, 1979).

Such definitions and formulations of these variables, as seen through conflict theory, have been empirically examined within marital relationships (Gottman, 1979, Revenstorf, Vogel, Wegener, Hahlberg, & Schindler, 1980). Several controlled studies have shown that the manner in which couples resolve conflict is highly predictive of eventual marital dissolution or stability depending on the tactics employed (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997;

Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Specific impairing tactics include use of contemptuous statements, communicating a sense of superiority, insults, mockery, and belligerent demands (Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

A growing amount of evidence has repeatedly identified destructive parental conflict tactics as the primary factor precipitating impaired child adjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991). Children are particularly hurt when parents use aggressive attacking styles to resolve conflict (Camera & Resnick, 1989; Radovanovic, 1993) or when the child is in any way placed into the middle of the conflict (Johnston, Gonzales, & Campbell, 1987). Impairments are generally associated with child exposure and involvement in the parental dispute (Kelly, 1993). These children frequently display difficulties in addressing normal developmental challenges (Johnston & Roseby, 1997). Parental behaviors that ignore the impact of divorce on children not only harm them they also act to damage the invaluable relationship between parent and child. Supportive and emotionally empathetic parent-child relationships have been shown to buffer children from some, but not all, of the negative impact of divorce and parental conflict (Fainsilber-Katz & Gottman, 1993).

#### Cognitive Versus Cognitive-Behavioral

Although divorce-parenting programs may find their theoretical justification in Conflict Theory, they utilize specific mechanisms grounded in Cognitive Theory and Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment to initiate change within parents. These methods are employed in a preventive effort to decrease the impact of problems resulting from divorce. Divorce-parenting classes can generally be divided into

two categories, those that are primarily information-based and those that are skills-based (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1996; Kramer, 1997). Both courses rely heavily on foundational concepts from Cognitive Theory. However, information-based classes appear to be strictly grounded in applied elements of cognitive theory, whereas skills-based programs utilize cognitive-behavior techniques to try to change parenting behaviors. The following section will identify the common foundational Cognitive Theory concepts that both courses employ. This is followed by an identification of the unique intervention approaches used by each program.

### Cognitive Theory

Prior to discussing the specifics of any intervention that uses cognitive theory it is important to specify the foundational concepts that it employs. The beginnings of Cognitive Theory are largely attributed to the work of Albert Ellis (1973) and Aaron Beck (1967). These clinicians were some of the first in the field to question the strongly held tenets of strong behaviorism and focus attention on individual cognition as a primary target for change (Granvold, 1994). Central models and concepts developed by Ellis and Beck, among others, include the mediational model and constructivism (Granvold, 1994).

According to cognitive theory, all individuals utilize mediation to attach significance and meaning to perceptions prior to acting on them (Granvold, 1994). The mediational model posits that an individual's "response to a given stimulus is assumed to be the product of a mediational process, with perception being the first covert activity" (Granvold, 1994, p.3). Perceptions then take on



great significance as the initial and primary mechanism through which the individual acts upon and responds to the world around them. Attaching meaning to stimuli includes elements such as previous experiences with similar stimuli, environmental and social contexts, and emotional importance of the stimulus (Granvold, 1994). Actual observable human behaviors are thereby seen as "the product of a complex series of mediational activities beginning with perception" (Granvold, 1994, p.4). Such a model is in distinct contrast to classical strict behavioralism which saw behavior as purely the result of environment or internal disposition (Granvold, 1994).

The concept of constructivism is well known in the field of philosophy, yet it also plays a fundamental role in Cognitive Theory. Constructivism can be described as the belief that individuals play an active role in the construction of their own reality (Granvold, 1994). Constructivism has also been succinctly described as having three primary features: "(1) the assertion that knowing is proactive and participatory; (2) the acknowledgment of tacit (unconscious) processes in all learning and knowing; and (3) the acknowledgement that learning and knowing are comprised of complex, developmental, and dynamic self-organizing processes" (Craighead, Craighead, Kazdin & Mahoney, 1994, p. 12).

#### Information-Based Courses as an Application of Cognitive Theory

The primary Cognitive Theory mechanism utilized in information-based divorce-parenting courses is cognitive restructuring. Classes universally seek to change the way that parents think about how they manage conflict and how they

perceive their children's needs. Revised thinking regarding these issues is believed to change the way that parents then behave toward each other and their children. The undergirding assumption implicit in such an approach is that "knowledge is power" and that, with a new understanding of both conflict and their children, that parents will change their harmful behaviors toward each other and their children.

Cognitive restructuring is used extensively in assertiveness training. Employment of this approach has been traditionally associated with Beck's cognitive therapy for depressed individuals and in Ellis' rationale-emotive behavior therapy (Payne, 1994). All of these models attempt to revise individual cognitions based on the belief that this will change their actual behaviors.

One of the most widely used divorce-parenting courses that applies strictly cognitive theory is Children Cope With Divorce, or CCWD, developed by Families First in Atlanta, Georgia (Kramer, 1998). CCWD classes have an all-inclusive focus in which instructors seek to communicate a comprehensive amount of information to parents during a brief 4 hour period of time (Fischer, 1998). Parents are presented a wide-range of information about divorce-parenting issues. Topics in the CCWD course include the emotional, co-parental, legal, economic, community and psychological dimensions of the divorce process, how children react to divorce, child adjustment and parental roles, new family structures, and getting help when needed (Fischer, 1998). CCWD programs seek to increase parental understanding of their child's needs and change their attitudes toward their children, themselves, and their child's other parent

(Fischer, 1998). This expansive amount of information is communicated in a didactic manner with limited feedback or interaction with parents (Kramer, 1998).

#### Skills-Based Courses as an Application of Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment

In contrast to information-based classes, skills-based programs have a more limited focus during which they concentrate on helping parents to develop specific communication and interaction skills to use with their child's other parent (Kramer, 1998). In using a cognitive-behavioral approach to change, skills-based classes employ Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). Distinct from strict behaviorism, Social Learning Theory proposes that thoughts have a causal initiating and explanatory function (Gambriel, 1994). Strict behaviorism, in contrast, suggests that thoughts function only as "covert behaviors that may be part of chains of behavior but do not have any initiating role" (Gambriel, 1994, p.37).

Within the social learning framework, cognitive-behavioral techniques center on cognitive processes and "procedurally target at least some therapeutic maneuvers specifically at altering cognition" (Gambriel, 1994, p.37). In this manner, cognitive behavioral approaches are similar to those based on cognitive theory. However, the two approaches use distinctly different techniques in order to develop new behaviors. Of the two approaches to divorce-parenting classes, information-based and skills-based, only skills-based programs utilize cognitive-behavioral techniques. However, it should be noted that due to the constraints of a time-limited classroom intervention, that only a certain few cognitive-behavioral approaches can actually be applied in these classes. Such usage of only some

of cognitive behavioral techniques without employing the whole theory, as is seen in divorce-parenting, has been endorsed by behavioral researchers (Thyer & Hudson, 1987). The best-known skills-based class used throughout the country is Children in the Middle or CIM (Arbuthnot, Kramer & Gordon, 1997). The specific cognitive-behavioral intervention techniques employed in skills-based divorce-parenting classes include chaining, model presentation and behavioral rehearsal.

Cognitive-behaviorists believe that all human behaviors involve complex chains of events. Behaviors such as brushing teeth or getting dressed generally follow a predictable succession of events that can be identified and changed as desired by doing specific tasks to include noting in a journal what occurs in these sequences. Skills-based divorce parenting classes utilize chaining to help parents to see the specific cognitions and behaviors that may lead to destructive conflict tactics. Attention is given to identifying the chain of events involved in behaviors, such as resolving a conflict with a former spouse or interacting with a child.

Model presentation has been used extensively in general cognitive-behavioral based parenting classes and in fear reduction interventions (Gambriel, 1994). It is now a central component of skills-based divorce parenting programs. This technique is typically done through the use of videotapes and involves clients observing another person acting out a sequence of behaviors (Gambriel, 1994). In skills-based divorce-parenting classes parents view other divorced parents using nondestructive conflict resolution tactics and communication to

resolve conflicts of interest. In order for model presentation to be effective, it must have the following components as defined by Gambriel (1994, p.51):

1. Identification of specific behaviors to be altered.
2. Presentation of a model.
3. Arranging for the observer to attend to the model.
4. Imitation of the modeling behaviors.
5. Reinforcement for imitation.

Model presentation is then followed by parents simulating in class the behaviors they have just observed. This behavioral rehearsal is believed to be central to engaging individual cognitive functioning and thereby effectively applying cognitive-behavioral techniques (Gambriel, 1994). These rehearsal techniques require instructors to be actively engaged with class participants in providing explanations, modeling, demonstration and feedback (Gambriel, 1994).

An inherent bias in the research here is the belief that specific outcome behavioral changes such as parental communication, destructive conflict tactics or intimate violence are more important than increases in knowledge regarding helpful parenting. Changes in knowledge do not always, and may only rarely actually translate into changes in behavior toward one's child or former spouse. Therefore, the current study will focus more on determining changes in behavioral outcomes versus simple changes in parental knowledge.

#### Further Review of Kramer's Findings

Kramer et al.'s (1998) study is the only research, prior to the current investigation, that has sought to conduct a comparative evaluation of skills-based

versus information-based divorce-parenting classes. Kramer et al. (1998) found that in comparison to a nonequivalent control, that neither type of divorce-parenting course resulted in increases of intimate violence nor did they result in any changes in child behaviors at a three-month follow-up. Results from this study did find some evidence that parents who attended either course improved the quality of communication with each other. The study also found that parents in the skills-based class reported decreases in the frequency of exposing their children to parental conflict slightly more than parents in the information or comparison groups (Kramer et al., 1998).

Although Kramer's (1998) outcome-based investigation represents a credible first step toward determining the impact of the two primary divorce-parenting instructional formats on key variables, there appear to be several conceptual or procedural flaws. These flaws are discussed below:

1. The study considered conflict as only one construct and therefore combines in one term the two distinct concepts of conflict tactics and conflicts of interest. This is in contrast to a growing body of research that acknowledges the complexity of relational conflict and sees it as two different constructs (Camera & Resnick; Emery, 1982; 1989; Straus, 1979). Conflict tactics have been defined as the specific overt actions or tactics employed by individuals within relationships to resolve their disagreements (Coser, 1956; Strauss, 1979). Conversely, the construct of "conflict of interest" can be defined as the

inevitable differences of opinion or agendas that occur in every relationship (Strauss, 1979).

2. A non-standardized and brief (eight items) instrument was employed to measure divorce-related parenting behaviors. These eight items were adapted from a previously unused measure. The comparatively limited number of items and the use of a non-standardized instrument measure arguably may have had difficulty capturing the wide range of behaviors reviewed in information-based classes.
3. Kramer (1998) utilized two existing divorce-parenting programs, CIM and CCWD. Although this method likely adds to the external validity (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) of the investigation by using actual divorce-parenting formats, it decreases the researcher's ability to control the actual differences between the two treatment groups and thereby decreases the internal validity of the study. Moreover, this usage of two existing programs that have not been standardized by the researcher increases the potential that the two methods may "blur" or be somewhat difficult to distinguish from each other.
4. Kramer et al. (1998) made no effort to assure course material in either class was sensitive to the possibility that by encouraging divorcing partners to communicate they may actually be putting some attendees at risk of intimate violence. Fuhrmann et al (1999) found clear examples of statements in existing divorce-parenting manuals that reflect an insensitivity to the potential of intimate violence. An example

of an original violence insensitive statement and a modified one as reported by Fuhrmann et al (1999, p. 31) is provided below:

**Original Statement:** "How well adults are able to cooperate as parents is one major variable in how well children adjust to divorce."

**Modified Statement:** "How well adults are able to cooperate as parents is one major variable in how well children adjust to divorce.

However, in families where domestic violence has occurred, cooperation is not the goal since it could place parents at risk. The goal for these parents should be parallel or detached parenting."

Admittedly, Kramer et al. (1998) found no evidence that parents attending the divorce parenting programs in their study had more incidents of intimate violence than parents in their comparison group. However, this represents only one study that had some methodological flaws that are noted above. With only one study having examined this question, it is clearly too premature to know whether or not material in divorce-parenting programs may or may not precipitate intimate violence between the divorcing parents. However, by utilizing intimate violence sensitive language, the current study specifically seeks to determine the effects of increasingly popular domestic violence sensitive programs.

### **Hypotheses**

In an effort to further determine the effects of divorce-parenting programs, the present study sought to replicate several elements of Kramer et al.'s (1998) investigation while at the same time attempting to remedy some of the



conceptual and procedural flaws identified in that study. The primary hypothesis is that cognitive-behaviorally based divorce-parenting classes are more effective than cognitive-based classes at decreasing children's reported exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest and parental reports of child behavior problems. A secondary overriding hypothesis is that there is no difference in self-reported intimate violence predicted by cognitive-behaviorally based as opposed to cognitive-based divorce-parenting classes. In particular, it is predicted that neither class will increase intimate violence. Specific hypotheses to be examined include:

1. From preclass to three months postclass, there will be no difference in the population mean of level of intimate violence for parents in either the cognitive-based or cognitive-behavioral based groups.
2. From preclass to three months postclass, the population mean of parental communication will improve in both the cognitive-based and cognitive-behavioral based groups.
3. From preclass to three months postclass, the population mean of child exposure to conflict will decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral based group than it will decrease in the cognitive-based group.
4. From preclass to three months postclass, the population mean of destructive conflict tactics will decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral based group than it will decrease in the cognitive-based group.

5. From preclass to three months postclass, the population mean of conflicts of interest will decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral based group than it will decrease in the cognitive-based group.
6. From preclass to three months postclass, the population mean of child behavioral difficulties will decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral based group than it will decrease in the cognitive-based group.
7. From preclass to immediately postclass, the population mean of knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors will increase more in cognitive-based than it will in the cognitive-behavioral based group.
8. From preclass to three months postclass, the population mean of knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors will increase more in cognitive-based than it will in the cognitive-behavioral based group.
9. After controlling for gender, prior participation in mediation and prior history of intimate violence, subjects receiving the cognitive-behavioral intervention will report significantly less child exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, and child behavior problems than subjects receiving the cognitive intervention.
10. After controlling for gender, prior participation in mediation, and prior history of intimate violence, group status will not significantly affect reported levels of intimate violence and parental communication.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY OF DIVORCE PARENTING QUASI- EXPERIMENT**

#### **Introduction**

The following chapter describes the quasi-experimental (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) research project conducted to compare the effects of two distinct divorce-parenting instructional formats. Initial attention is given to identifying the study's dependent variables and their measuring instruments. This is followed by a review of the project's design, which leads to an examination of how the researcher created and standardized the two intervention groups. The size and nature of the population are then reviewed prior to an explication of sampling techniques. Closer attention is then given to examining the measuring instruments along with the study's specific procedures. The chapter closes with an examination of the methods employed in analyzing the data.

#### **Independent and Dependent Variables**

The primary independent variable for the study is group status, a categorical variable, with two options, either cognitive-based or cognitive-behavioral based. History of an intimate violence incident and participation in mediation services, both categorical self-report variables, function as the two other independent "predictive" variables or covariates. Dependent variables consisted of seven interval measures as participant parents report them. They

include: intimate violence, parental communication, child exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, child behavior problems, and knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors. An expanded discussion of the instruments employed, to include their psychometrics and justification, will be presented in a later section of this chapter. Table 2 below outlines the dependent variables and their measuring instruments.

Table 2:

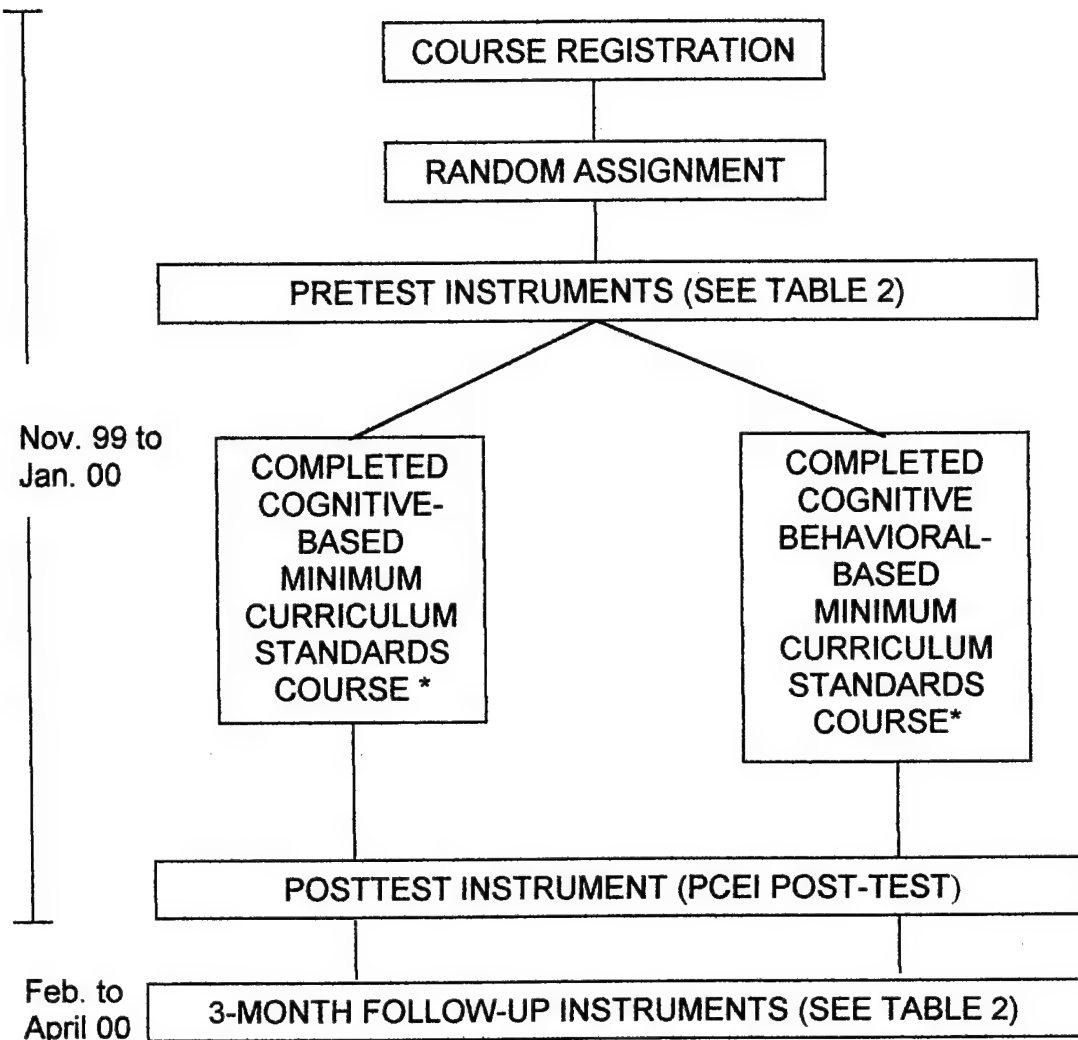
Dependent Variables and Their Measuring Instruments

<b>Dependent Variables:</b>	<b>Measuring Instruments:</b>
Intimate Violence	3-item scale from Newmark, Harrell & Salem (1995) - developed from Conflict Tactics Scale (Strauss, 1979), and 2 one-item scales regarding the use of permanent injunctions
Destructive Conflict Tactics	2-item scale from Newmark, Harrell & Salem (1995) - developed from Conflict Tactics Scale (Strauss, 1979)
Conflicts of Interest	6-item scale developed from Newmark et al. (1995)
Parental Communication	Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale (Ahrons, 1981), 10 items
Child Exposure to Conflict	9-item scale from Kramer (1998)
Child Behavior Problems	Behavior Rating Index for Children (BRIC) from Stiffman, Orme, Evans, Feldman & Keeney (1984) 13-item scale
Knowledge of Divorce-Related Parenting Behaviors	Parenting Course Evaluation Instrument or PCEI (Pretest & Posttest) (Capshaw, Whitworth & Abell, 2000), 23-item scale

## Design

A multiple-group pretest-posttest design with follow-up (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) was used to examine the effects of the two independent variables on the seven dependent variables. From November 1999 to January 2000, consenting participant parents attending the state-mandated divorce-parenting course at Life Management Center in Bay County, Florida were randomly assigned to one of two course instructional formats, either cognitive-based or cognitive-behavioral based, when they registered for the program at the center. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the design.

Just prior to attending the class, all study participants in both groups, completed the entire battery of pretest instruments identified in Table 2. This pretest measured all dependent variables (i.e., intimate violence, parental communication, child exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, child behavior problems, and knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors). Immediately after finishing the course, all study participants in both groups completed the Parenting Course Evaluation Instrument Post-test to measure their knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors.



\* = Intimate Violence Sensitive

**Figure 1. Design**

Three months after attending the course, all study participants were sent in the mail the full battery of instruments listed in Table 2. This follow-up measure sought to gauge all the dependent variables (i.e., intimate violence, parental communication, child exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, child behavior problems, and knowledge of divorce-related

parenting behaviors). Additionally, study participants were requested to complete the three-month follow-up battery of instruments within ten-twelve days of the surveys being mailed to them. This requirement was implemented in order to precipitate more timely and uniform return of the instruments, thereby reducing some history effects. As an incentive for study participants to complete this follow-up measure, all attendees who completed all instruments (i.e., Pretest, Post-test, and Three month follow-up) were reimbursed the cost of the course (twenty-five dollars). Further details about these methods are provided in the Procedures section of this chapter.

Both courses were designed to cover all topics outlined in the Recommended Minimum Curriculum Standards for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in the State of Florida as specified in Appendix B (Capshaw & Whitworth, 1998). Assuring that both courses were consistent with Florida's minimum curriculum standards increased the potential that findings would be relevant for other courses modeled on similar content with similar attention to administrative methodology (i.e., cognitive vs. cognitive-behavioral). Additionally, material covered in both courses was created to assure that it is sensitive to the high risk of intimate violence within divorcing relationships. Arguably, this step may reduce some of the generalizability of results as will be discussed later in this chapter. However, it is consistent with reasonable calls from intimate violence researchers that all language that may be misunderstood by batterers to give them permission to harm a victim be removed from divorce-parenting classes (Fuhrmann et al, 1999).

The study's design allowed for potential effects of individual differences between instructors (i.e., experience, gender and ability) to be confounded with the effects of interest. Although it is difficult to control for all the effects of such differences, the researcher implemented a design strategy to reduce the effects of such variation between the instructors. Prior to the study, the course instructors provided the class in two varying teams of two. This was not changed. However, the researcher matched the instructors into two teams of two based on their scores on a standardized evaluative measure (i.e., the Instructor Observation Checklist or IOC) from the Program for Instructional Excellence of Florida State University (see Appendix G). The IOC is designed to assess, from an observer's perspective, four instructor factors specified as presentation, organization, interaction, and verbal or non verbal communication.

When examining behavioral science based interventions, researchers need to identify and attempt to control any particular biases or opinions by those providing the intervention that may be inconsistent with the agreed upon goals of the standardized material. In an effort to monitor such biases within the current study, all five instructors completed a brief four-question survey soliciting their opinions and responses with respect to divorce and any strongly held religious beliefs that may impact their views toward divorce (see Appendix H). Instructors were asked if they had ever been divorced, and if divorced if they had any children resulting from the marriage that they ended. They were also asked about how available they believe divorce should be to couples and whether or not they had any religious beliefs that impact their views toward divorce.



The design did not attempt to include a third or control group due to the inherent difficulty in obtaining comparability between treatment and no treatment groups. As noted in the review of prior investigations of divorce-parenting programs, researchers have experienced acute problems in matching these groups on a specific set of known characteristics that will predict the variables of interest. This problem is principally impairing within jurisdictions such as the State of Florida where general attendance is now mandated. The decision to not include a third group was also based on the hesitancy of family court judges to withhold any parents from participating in a class since these judges almost universally believe these courses are an effective relitigation prevention program (Fischer, 1997).

### **Creation and Standardization of Interventions**

All subjects attended a four-hour divorce-parenting class either cognitive or cognitive-behavioral based. The researcher created both courses building from the course that was already being given at the test site. In order to comply with the Recommended Minimum Curriculum Standards for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in the State of Florida, both courses covered all required subject areas. However, the state does not mandate the amount of time given to each subject. Time recommendations are given, but not required. The specific instructional formats/methods employed in each class (i.e., didactic, interactional, chaining, model presentation, behavior rehearsal or passive learning) are also not mandated by the state. Therefore, the two versions of the course in this study were caused to vary considerably in the specific instructional techniques or

methods used. The cognitive-based course didactically covered all of the information specified in the recommended minimum curriculum standards and also attempted to use the amount of time recommended for each topic in the standards. The cognitive course instructors stated that it was unfeasible to conduct the course without having some reciprocal dialogue with attendees. Thus, there was some interaction in the cognitive-based class, but this was minimal (i.e., less than 20 minutes of the total four hours). The cognitive-based course did not use the methods of chaining, model presentation, or behavioral rehearsal.

Instructors were actively involved in the development of the specific course that they provided. Such active engagement of front line staff members into the intervention development process has been shown to be fundamental to the success of intervention research (Hasenfeld & Furman, 1994). In early October 1999, each instructor was told which course they were assigned to. They were then given initial drafts of the manual for their particular course, which they reviewed for a minimum of two weeks. Then during separate training sessions for each course, instructors provided feedback and comments on their particular manuals along with giving input into how their course was taught (see Appendix C: Instructor Training Sessions). When possible, instructor's suggested changes to the manuals were implemented. However, no changes were made that conflicted with the required necessary parameters for each course (i.e., minimum curriculum standards, time requirements, content and overall parity between the classes, and course instructional format). All instructors had been

advised early on of the need for these parameters and they had previously agreed to them as basic requirements for the researcher to be able to conduct the study at the site. During each training session, instructors were also provided with a brief review of the theoretical basis for their particular course (i.e., Cognitive or Cognitive-Behavioral). Additionally, in an effort to reduce collusion between the two courses, instructors were requested not to discuss or share any information from their specific course with the instructors giving the other course until the end of the study.

The cognitive behavioral based course extensively used the instructional techniques of chaining, model presentation, and behavioral rehearsal. The use of these instructional techniques was the only substantive difference between the two courses. Like the cognitive-based class, the cognitive behavioral based course attempts to cover all of the information specified in the recommended minimum curriculum standards. The cognitive behavioral based course also endeavors to use the amount of time recommended for each topic in the standards.

This strategy of keeping the classes similar on almost all characteristics except the instructional techniques increased the potential that the study would be able to detect true differences between the two methods. Kerlinger, who created what he defined as the “maxmincon principle” (1986, p. 286) recommended such a design approach to manage variance within a given study. The “maxmincon principle” calls for the researcher to maximize the systematic (or experimental) variance in the study, control extraneous variance, and

minimize error variance (Kerlinger, 1986). Experimental variance is "the variance of the dependent variable influenced by the independent variables or the variables of the substantive hypothesis" (Kerlinger, 1986, p.287). In our study this is the variance of intimate violence, parental communication, child exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, child behavior problems, and knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors influenced by instructional technique, either cognitive-based or cognitive-behavioral based. This was accomplished by assuring that each group only used one instructional technique and not the other.

At the same time, the design attempted to control extraneous variables or "independent variables extraneous to the purpose of the study" (Kerlinger, 1986, p.287) by assuring that the two classes were as similar as possible in all ways with the exception of instructional technique. Both classes therefore had the same curriculum, the same time allocations for each topic, use the same classroom, and were given at the same time of the day and week. The study's use of randomization in assigning subjects to experimental groups and the inclusion of covariates in the design also aid in controlling the effect of extraneous variables. Randomization does not guarantee that the two groups are equal, but it does allow for the experimental groups to "be considered statistically equal in all possible ways" (Kerlinger, 1986, p.288). Inclusion of covariates (i.e., participation in mediation and history of intimate violence) controls the effect of other explanatory or independent variables by building them directly into the design. Additionally, the researcher's attempt to rate and match

each of the instructors based on pre-study observations such as the IOC should aid in decreasing the impact of variation among instructors on the study's results.

The design attempted to minimize error variance or "factors associated with individual differences among subjects or errors of measurement" (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 289) by using standardized measures and providing clear and specific instructions to subjects. A review of these measures is provided later in this chapter, and actual instructions to subjects can be found in Appendix D and Appendix F.

The decision to build two courses from the existing minimum curriculum course at the test site versus using existing "packaged" divorce-parenting programs such as CCWD and CIM as is seen in Kramer et al. (1998) study was based on several factors. First, a secondary review of data obtained from all 51 divorce-parenting course providers in Florida (Capshew & Whitworth, 1998) found that only 24 programs, or slightly less than half, employed "packaged" programs such as CCWD. Secondly, Capshew and Whitworth's original data found no courses in Florida which were using the CIM program. Additionally, where these packaged programs are used in Florida, they are now required to be consistent with the Recommended Minimum Curriculum Standards for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in the State of Florida. The two classes created for the study were therefore more standardized and similar to what is provided across the state since they were specifically modeled after these standards. Finally, creating two instructionally distinct classes allowed the researcher to control the specific distinctions between the course versus accepting the

differences that may already exist. If the study simply used two existing "packaged" programs this would increase the potential that the two methods may "blur" or be somewhat difficult to distinguish from each other with respect to the cognitive/cognitive-behavioral techniques of greatest interest here.

All five instructors had advanced mental health degrees, one within social work, two in marriage and family therapy, and two in mental health counseling. They are all licensed by the State of Florida to provide individual, family and group mental health treatment. As licensed providers, all instructors have already received state-required training in intimate violence awareness and sensitivity.

After each class, instructors participated in short "debriefing sessions" with the researcher in order to gauge the consistency between the structure, format, timing and content found in their instructor's manuals and what actually occurred during each class. Each instructor completed a "consistency form" which requested them to rate the level of consistency that they believed they achieved between the instructions in the manual for each class and the class that they had just given. Since there were slight variations in the order of presentation of material in the two types of classes, distinct "consistency forms", one for the cognitive and one for the cognitive-behavioral class, were used (see Appendix J).

These attempts to gauge consistency, along with the development and usage of standardized instructor manuals, represent distinct efforts by the researcher to assess and enhance the integrity of the treatment provided during the duration of the study. Treatment integrity has been defined as the "degree to

which a treatment is delivered as intended" (Thomas, 1994, p. 281). Precisely defined instructor manuals, and follow-up debriefings to gauge consistency between actual classes and the instructions specified in the manuals, helped to assure that the courses were provided as the researcher had designed them. These efforts can increase a study's reliability. The absence of such a reliable delivery of interventions would present a clear threat to the internal and external validity of the investigation (Thomas, 1994).

### **Sampling Frame**

The sampling frame for the study consisted of individuals in Bay County, Florida who are in the process of divorce and who have one or more minor children. All parents in the state of Florida are required to complete a court approved divorce-parenting program prior to entry of a final divorce judgement (i.e., final dissolution of marriage) by the court. Local courts can grant attendance waivers for parents who demonstrate a hardship, which then precludes them from attending the course for good cause. Thus, a small number of divorcing parents were not included in the sampling frame. The test site at Life Management Center in Panama City is the only approved divorce-parenting course provider in Bay County. Therefore, any one required to take the course must attend the program at the test site.

Bay County is demographically similar to many other jurisdictions in Florida. Table 3 below summarizes demographic characteristics for Bay County and the State of Florida. A statistical analysis of the differences in demographic characteristics for the two treatment groups was completed as part of the study,

and can be found in results section of this text (see Chapter Four). Specific demographic characteristics that were monitored included gender and ethnicity which were obtained from survey #1 (See appendix D).

**Table 3**

Demographics from 1990 Census

<b>1990 Census category:</b>	<b>State of Florida</b>	<b>Bay County</b>
Population	12,937,926	126,994
% of population under 18 years old	22.2%	25.4%
Racial Categories:		
% white	73.3%	85%
% black	13.6%	10.7%
% hispanic	12.0%	1.3%
Median household income	\$27,483	\$28,322
% living below poverty line	12.7%	11.3%
Employment categories:		
Managerial	25.2%	24.5%
Technical, sales, and administrative support	34.2%	33.2%
Service	14.8%	16.9%
Farming, forestry and fishing	2.6%	2%
Precision production, craft and repair	11.5%	11.4%
Operators, fabricators and laborers	11.6%	11.8%
% with high school diploma or higher	74.4%	80.7%
% with bachelor's degree or higher	18.3%	19.2%

The dissolution of marriage rate among the population sampled (i.e., Bay County) appears to be somewhat higher than the rate of dissolution for the State of Florida. In 1998, 1,069 dissolutions of marriage were given in Bay County, whose resident midyear population was estimated as 148,180 during that year (Florida Vital Statistics Annual Report, 1998). The dissolution of marriage rate



was therefore 7.2. Florida's rate for that same year was 5.3, which was a decrease from 1990 when it was 6.1 (Florida Vital Statistics Annual Report, 1998).

### **Sampling**

Study participants were selected when they contacted the test site by phone to register for the course. Registering parents were read a standardized statement by center staff from the test site scheduling office (see statement in Procedures section of this chapter). The statement requested each parent's participation in a study of divorce-parenting courses in Florida. They were also notified in the prepared statement that participants who completed all three intervals of instruments (i.e., pretest, posttest and three-month follow-up) would be reimbursed the entire \$25 cost of the course. Each parent agreeing to participate in the study was then randomly assigned to attend a course on one of the three upcoming Saturdays, which is the day of the week on which the class has been historically given. Scheduling staff also told parents, as part of the prepared statement, that if they agreed to participate in the study that they would need to arrive for the class 25 minutes early to complete the pretest and they would need to stay 5 to 10 minutes after the class for the posttest. Additionally, scheduling staff maintained an ongoing log to note the numbers of parents who choose to accept versus decline to participant in the study. This allowed the researcher to track the initial rate of participant interest.

When participant parents arrived to complete the pretests they were required to first review a consent form on the cover of the instrument, a copy of

which is found in Appendix D. The consent form told them, among other things, that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could discontinue their participation at any time.

The \$25 reimbursement appeared to be a necessary incentive to assure that parents completed all three intervals of measures. The potential for not obtaining the three-month follow-up measures from participants was the primary concern precipitating the need for the incentive. A reimbursement check was mailed to participants by the researcher upon receipt of all instruments. Arguably, such use of incentives may have affected both the type and motivation of subjects, yet the use of random assignment of subjects to groups will distribute these effects evenly on average in both groups.

In addition to the \$25 reimbursement incentive, other mechanisms were employed to help assure that participant contact was maintained until the three-month follow-up measure was obtained. These mechanisms include requesting participant's alternate phone numbers such as work, relative or friend's numbers that they can be contacted at if they cannot be located at their prior home number. After completing survey #2 at the site, participants were also given a preaddressed stamped postcard that they could send to the researcher in the event that they change their home address. Participants were additionally mailed a reminder letter regarding the study and their need to notify the researcher if they changed their address. The researcher also contacted subjects by phone to assure that they received the three-month follow-up survey, and to request them to complete and mail the survey to the researcher. In spite of the use of these

mechanisms, it was evident that there would likely be some attrition over the duration of the study. Based on a power analysis (described below), and projections of potential attrition of around 50%, the researcher established a target number of 60 participants for both groups in order to help assure that enough parents completed all three measures.

### **Measurement**

Instruments used in the study were identified in Table 2 in chapter 3, can be found in Appendices D through E. The psychometrics for these instruments are summarized below.

#### **The Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale**

The Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale (Ahrons, 1981), is a ten item scale developed specifically to measure communication between divorcing or divorced parents. The two sub scales, support and conflict, gauge communication between the parents with five Likert-type response choices. Internal consistency alpha for the support communications sub scale is .75 for men and .74 for women. Conflict communication sub scale internal consistency alphas were .88 for women and .89 for men. Kelly (1991) has used this scale extensively to compare interactions between divorced parents depending on their participation in mediation versus adversarial systems. All of these items can be found in the Parental Communication section of the Divorce Parenting Project Surveys #1 and #3 items 50 to 59 in Appendices D and F.

### The Behavior Rating Index for Children (BRIC)

The BRIC (Stiffman, Orme, Evans, Feldman & Keeney, 1984), is a 13-item measure developed as a rating scale for parents, teachers, and other caretakers to gauge the degree of children's behavior problems. The instrument is brief, and can be used by respondents to assess children of all ages. The behavioral problems included in the BRIC are those that have appeared repeatedly in research. Items include both internalized and externalized children's behaviors. The instrument was initially studied with over 600 children participating in a group field experiment, some of whom had parents with mental disorders. All items use five Likert-type response choices. BRIC items can be found in the Children's Behaviors section of the Divorce Parenting Project Surveys #1 and #3 items 60 to 72 in Appendices D and F.

Internal consistency alphas for the BRIC range from .80 to .86, while test-retest correlations at four weeks were .71 to .89. With respect to known-instruments criterion validity, correlation between scores on the BRIC and the expansively used 118-item Child Behavior Checklist - Parent Report (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) was .76.

### The Parenting Course Evaluation Instrument (PCEI) (Pretest & Posttest)

The Parenting Course Evaluation Instrument or PCEI, Pretest and Posttest (Capshew, Whitworth & Abell, 2000) was developed as a measure of whether the content contained in the Florida minimum curriculum standards is being conveyed and retained by participants in divorce-parenting courses throughout Florida. The pretest measures parent's previous knowledge of helpful

divorce-related parenting behaviors in relation to seven sub scales, while the posttest gauges parent's gained knowledge regarding divorce-related parenting behaviors after they complete the course. The sub scales were designed to match the minimum curriculum standards and include divorce as loss, permanency of parental role/shared parenting, children's developmental stages, communicating with your children, spouse and child abuse, visitation, and where to find additional help. The instrument has 22 items, all of which are scored on a five-point Likert-type scale.

The PCEI (Pretest and Posttest) was piloted with over 600 divorcing parents attending divorce-parenting programs at 18 sites throughout Florida. Internal consistency alphas range from .41 to .78 for the pretest and .87 to .94 on the posttest. The reliability of the pretest sub scales ranged from .62 to .88, while those for the posttest sub scales ranging from .72 to .94. No construct or similar instrument validity has yet been established for the PCEI. PCIE items can be found in the Parental Knowledge section of the Divorce Parenting Project Surveys #1 and #3 items 28 to 49 in Appendices D and F. They are also found in Divorce Parenting Project Survey #2, all items, in Appendix E.

#### Measure to Assess Intimate Violence and Destructive Conflict Tactics

To assess the variables of intimate violence and destructive conflict tactics the study used a measure employed by Kramer et al (1998) which was adapted from Newmark, Harrell, and Salem (1995) who developed their scale from the Conflict Tactics Scale (Strauss, 1979). Internal consistency alphas for the measure from Kramer et al. (1998) range from .75 to .76. While Newmark et al

(1995) found internal consistency alphas ranging from .68 to .82. The five-item scale is divided into the two sub scales with three items for intimate violence and two identified as destructive conflict tactics. However, the reported alphas are for all five items. Each item is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale. No other validity information was available for this scale. However, this scale represents the only instrument available in the literature, which seeks to gauge intimate violence and destructive conflict tactics specifically between divorcing or divorced partners. All of these items can be found in the Relationship History section of the Divorce Parenting Project Surveys #1 and #3 items 21 to 25 in Appendices D and F.

#### Measure to Assess Child Exposure to Conflict

Child exposure to conflict was measured with a 9-item scale developed by Arbuthnot and Gordon (1996) as used by Kramer et al. (1998). Internal consistency alphas for the measure from Kramer et al. (1998) range from .63 to .64. Possible scores on the measure range from 9 to 45. Higher scores reflect less child exposure to parental conflict and lower scores indicate more child exposure to this conflict. No other validity information was available for this scale. However, here again, this scale represents the only instrument available in the literature that has attempted to empirically measure child exposure to parental conflict. All of these items can be found in the Children's Issues section of the Divorce Parenting Project Surveys #1 and #3 items 12 to 20 in Appendices D and F.

### Measure to Assess Parental Conflicts of Interest

A 6-item scale adapted by the researcher from Newmark et al. (1995) was used to measure parental conflicts of interest. Slight modifications were required to the instrument as it was used by Newmark et al. (1995) since they specified husband or wife in the items. The adapted measure replaces those terms with "your child's other parent". Internal consistency alphas obtained by Newmark et al. (1995) on the original instrument ranged from .76 to .81. All of these items can be found in the Conflicts of Interest section of the Divorce Parenting Project Surveys #1 and #3 items 6 to 11 in Appendices D and F.

### Summary of Criterion Used for Selection of Measures

Measures for the study represent "state of the art" instruments, which were primarily selected because they seek to capture the multi-dimensional and similar constructs believed to be present within divorcing families. Most of these instruments have been previously used with the target populations and have alpha levels of close to .70 or higher. However, some measures such as the PCEI, include alpha levels somewhat lower than .70. These instruments were still retained for the research because they represent the only measures that are specifically designed for evaluating participants in a divorce-parenting program.

The assembling of the entire battery of all seven sub-scales into a 72-item instrument, as was done here, represents the first effort to combine all of these scales. Thus, a thorough analysis of the reliabilities for each item and sub-scale in the instruments (i.e., Survey #1 and Survey #3) was conducted and can be found in the Results Section of this text in Chapter Four.

## **Procedures**

In October 1999, the researcher met with all four current course instructors to notify them of the course they have been randomly assigned to teach and to train them in that specific course. Instructors were only trained in the course they were assigned to by the researcher. The training focused on a close review of the manual developed for each course, along with a brief review of instructional techniques that may be new to the instructor. Each manual delineated the specific time frames that instructors used to cover each topic, and it stated instructional techniques which could not be used in their particular course (i.e., instructors in the cognitive-based class were advised not to use techniques such as modeling, chaining or rehearsal).

From November 1999 to January 2000, parents who contacted the Life Management Center Program in Panama City, Florida to be scheduled to attend the divorce-parenting class were read the following statement:

"The class you are scheduling to attend is being studied by a researcher from the Florida State University School of Social Work. Participants in the study who complete a brief survey just prior to the class, immediately after the class, and a third brief survey three months later through the mail will be reimbursed the entire cost of the class, \$25. Your participation is entirely voluntary and no one will be informed of your decision to participate or not to participate. Your participation will help in improving these classes for parents throughout the country. Would you be willing to participate in the study and be reimbursed \$25 for your participation?"



Scheduling staff then registered participants for one of three upcoming Saturday class dates based on a pre-designated schedule (created by the researcher) which randomly assigns participants to either one of the two treatment groups. Scheduling staff also made a note on the contact form already used by the center to indicate the parent's decision regarding participation. The researcher reviewed these procedures with the scheduling staff in early September 1999. Staff members were able to contact the researcher with questions or concerns through a local business number specifically designated for the research project.

In order to obtain an initial consent rate, and to monitor for differences between parents who agree to participate and those who did not, the researcher reviewed all scheduling staff divorce parenting class contact forms during the initial (i.e., three months) study period. By reviewing these forms, the researcher was be able to track for differences between participants and non-participants based on gender, number of years married to the person they were divorcing and if they had used a "certificate of indigency" to pay for the course. The results of this review are presented in Chapter Four of this text.

From November 1999 to January 2000, when participant parents arrived to complete the pretests they were initially required to first review a consent form, a copy of which is found in Appendix D. This statement told them, among other things, that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could discontinue their participation at any time. The researcher administered all

pretests and posttests. Individuals who arrived up to fifteen minutes late to take the pretest were still allowed to participate. However, it was necessary to decline participation to those arriving after that time in order to avoid any delays to the class starting time.

As noted earlier, the pretest instrument has 72 mostly Likert-type response items. Time estimates for completion of the survey had previously ranged from 10 to 15 minutes, yet these estimates were based on completion times by individuals who had a minimum of a high school education. Classes likely included some subjects with lower educational levels. Given these constraints, it appeared that some individuals might not be able to complete the entire instrument within the allotted time. The researcher therefore placed two sub scales of lower priority to the study near the end of the survey. These sub scales were the 10-item Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale (Ahrons, 1981), items 50 to 59, and the 13-item BRIC (Stiffman et al., 1984) scale on children's behaviors, items 60 to 72 in Appendices D and F.

After completing the posttest, participants were reminded that they needed to complete the follow-up measure that would later be mailed to them at the end of three months. They were given a business card with the researcher's business number specifically designated for the study that they could call to report any address changes. The researcher maintained a completion log noting all subjects that completed the pretest and posttest.

Approximately one and a half months after they had attended the course, participants who completed the first two surveys were mailed a reminder letter

that initially thanked them for participating in the study, and which reminded them that the third and final survey would be mailed to them within a few weeks. Participants were reminded again in the letter to notify the researcher of any address changes by sending in their pre-stamped postcard or calling the researcher with any such modifications.

Starting on 1 February 2000, the researcher began mailing the follow-up instruments with postage paid return envelopes to participants from the November 6<sup>th</sup> class. Mailings with the follow-up surveys were then sent to all other participants at the three-month interval after they completed the class. As the researcher received follow-up instruments, a note was made in the completion log and the participant was then mailed a \$25 check. Upon receipt of the number of completed follow-up surveys, as defined by the pre-investigation analysis of power, the researcher began data analysis. In order to assure that the sample was as large as possible, the researcher delayed the final analysis of the data until 30 April 2000 which is when the final three-month follow-up was received.

In order to assure strict confidentiality, all study materials with participant's names or other identifying information (i.e., surveys, postcards, letters, and logs) were secured by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's residence. None of these materials were kept, stored or maintained at any other location or in the possession of any other individual either during or after the study. Additionally, the researcher decided to remove all participant names and addresses from the surveys. This information was only placed on a small index

card, which was maintained in a secure place by the researcher. Participant completion of each survey was tracked based on a number that they were assigned when completing Survey #1.

Life Management Center's insurance provider and the executive director of the facility delayed the initial start of the study pending their final approval of the project. Additionally, the test site needed to develop written procedures for conducted research projects within their facility. Obtaining these approvals, and complying with the new procedures, delayed the project by one month from its previously planned start date. However, full approval to conduct the study was obtained on 8 October, 2000 (see Appendix I). The Human Subjects Committee of the Florida State University Office of Research gave written approval of the study on 15 September 1999 (see Appendix I). On January 31, 2000 the Human Subjects Committee also gave approval for the researcher to contact subjects by telephone to confirm that they had received their surveys and to request that they complete and mail them to the researcher (see Appendix I).

### **Power Analysis**

Prior to the start of the quasi-experiment, a pre-investigation analysis of power or a power analysis was conducted in an effort to define an appropriate sample size for the project. Sample size ( $N$ ), is only one of the three parameters that delineate the power of a statistical test (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). The other two parameters are "the predetermined region of rejection (as determined by alpha, and the direction of the hypothesis being tested) and the magnitude of the effect size" (Orme & Combs-Orme, 1986, p. 3). The three parameters are set up

so that if you know two of them you can determine the third one. The current investigation sets alpha (i.e., the probability of a type I error) at the conventional .05. There are three distinct strategies for determining effect size (Orme & Combs-Orme, 1986). They include estimates from prior investigations, choosing an effect size that has a practical or theoretical significance in the population under study, or picking from the conventional small, medium or large effect sizes (Orme & Combs-Orme, 1986). Since some effect sizes for the variables of interest are known from Kramer et al (1998) and Kurkowski, Gordon, and Arbuthnot (1993), the strategy of using estimates from previous research appeared to be a good starting point for the current study.

Kramer et al. (1998) found effects sizes ranging from .55 to .67 for the variables of parental communication, parental knowledge, and child exposure to conflict. Additionally, Kurkowski et al. (1993) reported an effect size of .71 with the respect to the independent variable of children being caught in the middle of their parent's arguments. Such effect sizes would be considered by Cohen (1988) to be generally medium in size. However, it is important to keep in mind that these effect sizes are computed as a comparison between treatment and control groups, yet the current investigation did not contain a control group. Therefore, effect sizes were computed as a comparison between the two treatment groups. The resulting effect sizes were therefore expected to be considerably smaller than those found in previous research that employed control groups. Given such a difference, a small ES of  $r^2 = .10$  was used for the calculation of power and sample size. The ES for all independent combined

variables or  $R^2$  (i.e., group status, participation in mediation, and history of an intimate violence incident) was expected to be .35.

As prescribed in Cohen and Cohen (1983, p. 154-155), the formula for calculating the required sample size when the researcher is seeking to determine "the proportion of  $Y$  variance accounted for by set  $B$ , over and above that accounted for in set  $A$ " is:

$$\begin{aligned} f^2 &= (R^2_{Y.AB} - R^2_{Y.A}) / (1 - R^2_{Y.AB}) \\ &= (.35 - .10) / (1 - .35) = .25/.65 = .384 \end{aligned}$$

Cohen and Cohen (1983) then advise the researcher to obtain an  $L$  value from Table E.2 for power set at .05 (p.527). With  $k_B$  being the number of main effect independent variables, and the desired power (Type II error rate of .2) being .80, the  $L$  value for  $k_B = 1$  is 7.85. The sample size is then computed with the following formula from Cohen and Cohen (1983, p.155) using the above values and  $k_A =$  to the number of covariates or 2:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Sample size } (n) &= L/f^2 + k_A + k_B + 1 \\ &= (7.85/.384) + 2 + 1 + 1 = 24.4 \end{aligned}$$

Accordingly, in order to achieve a power of .8 , and having alpha set at .05, a minimum sample size of 25 persons per group was required to detect an effect size for group status. It was likely that there would be some attrition during the three-month period between Survey #2 and Survey # 3. As specified in the Procedures section of the text, the researcher employed several means to decrease attrition including seeking to maintain regular mail contact and phone contact with participants. However, given the high level of mobility often seen in

divorcing families, it was still possible that a number of subjects would be lost three months after they attended the course. Therefore, the study over-sampled above the 25 persons needed in an attempt to assure that an adequate amount of data was collected by the end of the project. The researcher subsequently established a target number of 60 participants to complete the first two surveys for both groups. The resulting target sample size was then 120. The study was precluded from setting a target number higher than this due to the limited financial resources available for the research. All participants who completed all three instruments were still reimbursed the \$25 course fee regardless of whether a statistically adequate number for each group had been already obtained.

### **Data Analysis – Statistical Tests**

The data analysis techniques of paired sample t tests, independent sample t tests and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were employed in the study. Paired sample t tests were conducted to assess hypotheses one and two. Hypotheses three through eight were analyzed using independent sample t tests. Appropriate use of both the paired sample t tests and independent sample t tests is based on the assumption that the populations sampled are normally distributed, that the individuals observations from each are independent of one another and that they are of equal variance (Cohen, 1969). When these assumptions are met the researcher can use these tests to examine the null hypothesis that the two population means are equal or:  $H_0: m_A - m_B = 0$  (Cohen, 1969).

For hypotheses nine and ten, ANCOVA was used to compare the difference in outcome means across the groups for the independent variables. The primary reason for the selection of ANCOVA for hypotheses nine and ten over other statistical tests was its ability to statistically control potentially irrelevant sources of data (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). ANCOVA does this by including in the analysis, one or more other independent subject attributes or covariates, in addition to the primary or main effect independent variable. This produces estimates of treatment effects that control for these covariates. Or as stated by Cohen and Cohen (1983) "an adjustment is made for the any initial group differences on the covariates" (Cohen and Cohen, 1983, p. 381).

The selection of properly selected covariates that have been shown to be associated with the dependent variables therefore becomes an issue of primary concern in attempting to reduce error variance (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). If done correctly, such inclusion of appropriate covariates subsequently increases "the precision and power of the analysis of the treatment effects" (Cohen and Cohen, 1983, p. 381). In the current study, the independent variables of participation in mediation services and history of an intimate violence incident served as covariates. Both of these variables have been shown to correlate with changes in the dependent variables (see Chapter Two). Inclusion of these covariates also allowed the researcher to monitor and analyze any differences between subjects who complete all three of the surveys required in the research and those who do not.



The use of ANCOVA is based on several key assumptions. ANCOVA assumes that the residuals are independently and normally distributed with zero means and the same variance (Maxwell, O'Callaghan & Delaney, 1993). ANCOVA also assumes that there is homogeneity (equality) of regression slopes within the analysis (Maxwell, O'Callaghan & Delaney, 1993). The quasi-experimental design appeared to be adequately suited to be consistent with these assumptions. Random assignment of subjects to treatment groups was the primary mechanism employed by the design to meet these assumptions. However, the researcher was also required to examine the data produced from the study for violations. This was accomplished through an examination of residuals or "residual plots".

Hypothesis testing in ANCOVA can be seen from the perspective of comparing linear models (Maxwell, O'Callaghan & Delaney, 1993). The ANCOVA linear model with a second covariate as it was used in the current study is listed below:

$$Y_{ij} = \mu + \alpha_j + \beta_X X_{ij} + \beta_Z Z_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

where  $X_{ij}$  and  $Y_{ij}$  represent the scores of the  $i$ th individual in the  $j$ th group on the first covariate and on the dependent variable, and  $Z_{ij}$  denote the scores on the second covariate (Maxwell, O'Callaghan & Delaney, 1993).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter begins with an examination of the sample's characteristics, followed by a review of the results of treatment standardization measures. An analysis of the reliability of the dependent measures is then provided along with distributions of group scores. After a brief outline of the correlation of covariates, the chapter presents a comparison of pretest group scores. Overall pretest to follow-up differences on the dependent variables are then provided as a measure of the general effectiveness of both courses. The remainder of the chapter reports the results of the study's ten hypotheses to include analysis of the hypothesized differences between the two groups on the dependent variables and a description of the effects of group status and the covariates on the dependent measures.

#### **Characteristics of the Sample**

Table 4 below, details the number of individuals agreeing to participate in the study at different time frames. Of the 240 persons calling to register for the class at Life Management Center from September to December 1999, 176, or 73%, initially agreed to participate in the research. Of that group, 71%, or 125,

actually completed the pretest when they arrived for the class. Approximately 98% of those 125 subjects, or 122, also took the posttest immediately after the course. Of those 125 subjects taking the pretest, 106 also completed the three-month follow-up for a final retention rate of 85%.

Table 4

Number of Individuals Agreeing to Participate

Number registered for the course	Number initially agreed to participate	Number completed course	Number completed pretest	Number completed posttest	Number completed three-month follow-up
240	176	172	125	122	106

As noted above, 240 parents contacted Life Management Center from September to December 1999 to register for the class. Of those 240, 172 persons actually attended the class and 125, or 73%, of those attending participated in the study. Table 5, provides a comparison for several demographic and family characteristics between those parents who completed the pretest and those who did not.

Table 5

Comparison of Participants vs. Non-participants

	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Non-Participants</b>
<b>Gender</b>	(n= 125)	(n=47 )
male	51	26
female	74	21
<b>Use of Indigency form</b>	(n= 125)	(n=47 )
no	119	47
yes	6	0
<b>Number of Children</b>	(n= 125)	(n=47 )
range	1-4	1-4
mean	1.5	1.6
<b>Number of Years Married</b>	(n= 125)	(n=47 )
range	1-25	1-21
mean	9.4	9.6

Chi-Square tests and ANOVAs were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences between the participant and non-participant means for available demographic information. Use of the indigency form was significantly different with all parents using indigency forms, a total of 6, to cover the cost of the course also agreeing to participate in the study. No significant differences between these groups were found at the .05 level for all other variables including gender, number of children, and number of years married.

Demographic characteristics for the sample (i.e., all participants who completed the pretest, posttest and follow-up) and those subjects who did not complete all three instruments are provided in Table 6. Analysis of the demographic variables for these two groups (i.e., study completers vs. non-completers) was completed using ANOVA. No significant differences were found

except in the number of years married, Completers (Mn = 10.43) and Non-completers (Mn = 6.33), [ $F(1, 121)=7.83, p<.05$ ].

Table 6

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Sample	Study Non-Completers
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 106 )	(n = 18 )
male	46	8
female	60	10
<b>Ethnicity</b>	(n = 106 )	(n = 18)
Black/African American	4	0
White/Caucasian	95	18
American Indian	3	0
Hispanic	1	0
Asia/Pacific Islander	1	0
Hebrew	1	0
Amerasian	1	0
<b>Divorce Mediation</b>	(n = 106 )	(n = 18)
yes	12	3
no	94	15
<b>Intimate Violence History (Protective Orders)</b>	(n = 105)	(n = 18)
yes	4	1
no	101	17
<b>Number of Years Married</b>	(n = 105)	(n = 18)
range	1 to 25	1 to 16
mean	10.43	6.33

Reduction of the Sample

A review of the 106 subjects who completed all three measures found that 16 individuals within that sample were married. As noted in Chapter 3, one of the

assumptions of doing the data analysis for the present study is that the observations are independent. The analysis requires that there be no relationship between the observations in the different groups or between the observations in the same group. Kenny and Judd (1986) note that this is a problem common to many research designs attempting to investigate treatments, or interventions that are applied to couples or families. The researcher had initially attempted to address this concern within the design by requesting the test site staff to modify their practice of allowing former couples who request to attend the class together to do so. The test site was unable to make such a modification. Therefore, the initial sample of 106 was reduced by randomly selecting and removing one person from each of the 8 pairs of former couples. No other known former partners were left in the sample. The final sample was then reduced to 98 subjects. All results and analyses that follow relate only to this smaller sample size.

### **Outcome of Treatment Standardization Measures**

All four instructors were evaluated on the Instructor Observation Checklist (IOC) by two (non-subject) divorced parents in September 1999 during the provision of the course as it had previously existed. Each instructor was observed with the exception of one "back-up" instructor who provides the course only if one of the others is ill or has an emergent family situation precluding them from teaching. Based on the results of the IOC observations, the researcher created two teams of two instructors. The instructor who scored the highest on

the IOC was paired with the instructor who scored the lowest while the remaining two were placed together.

Actual course dates for the study, specific instructional formats and the instructor's teams are listed below in Table 7. The two instructor teams composed of instructor #1 and instructor #2 for the cognitive-based course and instructor #3 and instructor #4 for the cognitive-behavioral. Prior to the onset of the study, all four instructors were advised of the importance of their teaching their class as scheduled and the importance of keeping the groups intact. Due to family emergencies, instructor #2 was unfortunately not able to teach the 6 November class and instructor #1 could not teach the 20 November or 8 January classes as originally scheduled. These changes resulted in instructor #5, the "back-up" instructor co-teaching all three of the cognitive-based classes. The researcher was notified early enough about the changes to train instructor #5 in the cognitive course before the class date.

Table 7

Course Schedule (For DPP Study-Phase One)

MONTH / DATE:	INSTRUCTORS:	COURSE THEORY:
November 6th	#1 and #5	Cognitive
November 20 <sup>th</sup>	#2 and #5	Cognitive
December 4 <sup>th</sup>	#3 and #4	Cognitive-Behavioral
December 18th	#3 and #4	Cognitive-Behavioral
January 8 <sup>th</sup>	#2 and #5	Cognitive
January 22 <sup>nd</sup>	#3 and #4	Cognitive-Behavioral

It could be alleged that gender differences between the two instructor teams (i.e., one both female and the other male and female) might account for some variation in subject scores. The researcher attempted to reduce such possible effects by seeking to assure that the instructors providing the class during the duration of the study would only be female. However, this could not be done since each instructor, including the one male, teaches the class as part of his or her specific job responsibilities. The facility was not able to alter these for the duration of the study.

Two of the five instructors reported that they had been divorced, with one of these noting that a child resulted from the marriage that had ended. Four of the instructors reported that they believed divorce should be available to couples experiencing irreconcilable differences. One instructor stated the belief that divorce should only be available to couples experiencing desertion, domestic violence, substance abuse, or any other serious problem. This same instructor reported having strongly held religious beliefs regarding marriage and divorce. In particular, the instructor wrote "I believe divorce should be an option only in cases of domestic violence, after repeated infidelities, etc. I feel that often the main cause of divorce is people not knowing each other long enough before getting married". Three of the other four instructors described having strongly held religious beliefs, yet they denied that these beliefs had any impact on their views toward divorce.



Instructors generally rated themselves as providing classes that were "consistent" to "very consistent" with what was specified in their manuals. Overall consistency rating between what was actually taught in each cognitive-behavioral class and what is prescribed in the instructor manual are provided below in Tables 8 and 9. For the cognitive-behavioral course, instructors generally rated their classes as "very consistent" with the manual with the exception of two course areas. They rated themselves as only "consistent" in the area of "My Plan for Telling my Children About the Divorce Worksheet" and "somewhat consistent" for "Chaining Exercise Handout (Part One)". These areas were new to the instructors.

Table 8

Consistency Ratings for Cognitive-Behavioral Courses

CLASS DATE:	INSTRUCTOR:	OVERALL CONSISTENCY RATING BY PERCENT:				
		Not Consistent	Minimally Consistent	Somewhat Consistent	Consistent	Very Consistent
Dec. 4	#4				5%	95%
	#3			5%		95%
Dec. 18	#4					100%
	#3					100%
Jan. 22	#4				5%	95%
	#3					100%

Overall consistency rating by each instructor for each cognitive class are provided below in Table 9. These instructors generally rated their classes as

"consistent" with the manuals, yet they noted that the course areas of "Legal Concepts" and "Legal Concepts for Divorcing Parents" were only "somewhat consistent" with what was dictated in the manual. They reported some difficulty in maintaining the consistency in these areas because that material was entirely new to the course. Their reported level of consistency improved over the duration of the study. The relatively high level of consistency reported by the instructors suggests that a level of standardization of the interventions was achieved.

Table 9

Consistency Ratings for Cognitive Courses

CLASS DATE:	INSTRUCTOR:	OVERALL CONSISTENCY RATING BY PERCENT OF CLASS MATERIAL:				
		Not Consistent	Minimally Consistent	Somewhat Consistent	Consistent	Very Consistent
Nov. 6	#5				35%	65%
	#1	5%		15%	15%	65%
Nov.20	#5				55%	45%
	#2			5%	75%	20%
Jan. 8	#5				55%	45%
	#2				30%	70%

**Reliability Analysis for Dependent Variable Measures**

Internal consistency estimates of reliability were computed for all seven dependent variable measures of the current study. They are reported below in Table 10 . Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) report that observed Cronbach's

alphas  $\geq .70$  can be considered as acceptable. Dependent variable measures that met this threshold for both the pretest and follow-up included conflicts of interest, parental communication, child behavior problems, and parental knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors (pretest, posttest, and follow-up).

The Cronbach's alphas for the 3-item scale developed by Newmark, Harrell & Salem (1995) to measure intimate violence were .43 on the pretest and .36 for the follow-up. This measure was consequently dropped from the analysis since its alphas were considerably below the acceptable level of .70 . The remaining intimate violence one-item scales (i.e., RELHIS6, RELHIS6F, RELHIS7 and RELHIS7F) that solicited information about the need for permanent injunctions as a self-report outcome measure of that dependent variable were retained. These items could not have reliabilities run on them because they are single item indicators.

As described above, the study had originally intended to capture the variable of intimate violence through two distinct yet related measures, the 3-item scale from Newmark, Harrell & Salem (1995) and the specific one-item questions regarding the use of permanent injunctions. The 3-item scale was dropped due to low reliability. Consequently, the variable of intimate violence is therefore referred to in the following text by the more descriptive names of "use of permanent injunctions by self " and "the use of permanent injunctions by other parent ".

The measure of child exposure to conflict was not retained for the study because both Cronbach alphas were below .70 at .55 and .68 for the pretest and follow-up respectively. However, the two-item measure of destructive conflict tactics was kept even though the pretest alpha of .61 was lower than desired. This was done because the follow-up alpha of .72 was within the acceptable level. The study had initially intended to also measure the covariate of age, yet this question was inadvertently excluded from all measures. The covariate of age is therefore not included in any analysis, results or discussion.

Table10

Internal Consistency Estimates of Reliability

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Measuring Instruments</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
<b>Intimate Violence</b>	-3-item scale  -1 Item scales re: use of permanent injunctions	Items Relhis3-5: Pretest = .43 Follow-up = .36  Item RELHIS6: Item RELHIS7: Item RELHISF6: Item RELHISF7:
<b>Destructive Conflict Tactics</b>	2-item scale	Pretest = .61 Follow-up = .72
<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	6-Item scale	Pretest = .89 Follow-up = .90
<b>Parental Communication</b>	10 item scale	Pretest = .87 Follow-up = .86
<b>Child Exposure to Conflict</b>	8-item scale	Pretest = .55 Follow-up = .68

Table 10 (continued)

Internal Consistency Estimates of Reliability

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Measuring Instruments</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
<b>Child Behavior Problems</b>	13-item scale	Pretest = .87 Follow-up = .87
<b>Knowledge of Divorce-Related Parenting Behaviors</b>	22-item scale	Pretest = .81 Posttest = .89 Follow-up = .90

**Correlations of Covariates**

Bivariate correlations using Pearson  $r$  were computed for all the covariates in the study with all the dependent variables as measured at the pretest, follow-up and at posttest for the parental knowledge variable. Table 11, below provides a correlation matrix of these computations. These variables were chosen for inclusion here because, as noted in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, some linkages between them have been seen in previous studies of divorcing families. No significant correlations were found for the covariates of ethnicity and participation in divorce mediation. Gender was significantly correlated with pretest parental knowledge ( $r=.321$ ;  $p=.001$ ) and with intimate violence history ( $r=.212$ ;  $p=.04$ ). The first correlation indicates that participant females had higher pretest knowledge of divorce related parenting behaviors. The second correlation reflects that males reported a higher usage of permanent injunctions by their child's other parent. A significant correlation was also found for use of permanent injunctions by self and destructive conflict tactics ( $r= -.213$ ;  $p= .03$ ).

This correlation reflects that a higher usage of permanent injunctions in the three months prior to the study was associated with a higher level of destructive conflict tactics between the parents during that same period.

Table 11

Correlation Matrix of all Covariates with all Dependent Variables

	ETHNIC	DIVMED	GENDER	RELHIS6	RELHIS7
CHLDB	.038	-.044	.025	-.070	.111
CHLDBF	.028	-.064	.136	-.026	.024
CON	.150	.014	-.022	.143	.184
CONFO	.001	-.084	.051	.055	.185
DCONTAC	-.126	.052	.165	-.213*	-.007
DCONTACF	-.073	.104	.116	-.123	.118
PRECOM	.056	-.025	-.027	-.010	-.143
FOCOM	.024	.050	.069	-.009	-.014
PREKNO	.000	-.197	.321**	-.165	.006
POSKNO	-.117	-.118	.078	-.158	.089
FOLKNO	-.114	-.184	.157	-.187	.115
ETHNIC	1.000	.001	.073	-.047	.029
DIVMED	.001	1.000	.049	.100	-.062
GENDER	.073	.049	1.000	-.177	.212*
RELHIS6	-.047	.100	-.177	1.000	-.038
RELHIS7	.029	-.062	.212*	-.038	1.000

Note: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

The variables (and labels) are child behavior problems (CHLDB), child behavior problems follow-up (CHLDBF), conflicts of interest (CON), conflicts of interest follow-up (CONFO), destructive conflict tactics (DCONTAC), destructive conflict tactics follow-up (DCONTACF), parental communication (PRECOM), parental communication follow-up (FOCOM), pretest parental knowledge (PREKNO), posttest parental knowledge (POSKNO), follow-up parental knowledge (FOLKNO), ethnicity (ETHNIC), participation in divorce mediation (DIVMED), gender (GENDER), use of permanent injunctions by self (RELHIS6), and use of permanent injunctions by other parent (RELHIS7).

The primary value of checking for significant and non-significant correlations here relates to the need to check for the effects of multicollinearity on subsequent analysis (i.e., ANCOVA). Multicollinearity refers to "substantial correlation among a set of IV's (independent variables)" (Cohen and Cohen, 1983, p.115). It is possible that since the covariates of gender and use of permanent injunctions by other parent were significantly correlated that they may be overlapping in their effects on the dependent variables. Yet, the correlation of .212 is quite small reflecting only minimal multicollinearity within the data. As recommended by Cohen and Cohen (1983), the present study uses a hierarchical approach to ANCOVA as a means of separating the effects of the independent variables. Conducting the data analysis in a hierarchical manner therefore removes the most of minimal effects of this small correlation.

### **Pretest Group Comparisons**

ANOVA was used to compare pretest scores between the cognitive and the cognitive-behavioral groups. This was done as a test of the effectiveness of random assignment of subjects to the two different groups. These pretest scores are provided in Table 12 below. No significant differences at the .05 level were found between the two groups for all dependent variables on the pretest. This indicates that random assignment was generally successful in assuring the similarity between the cognitive and cognitive-behavioral groups.

Possible scores for the variable of conflicts of interest ranged from 0 to 24 with lower scores reflected a high level of conflict. The range of scores for the measure of destructive conflict tactics was from 0 to 8 with higher scores

indicating a higher usage of these tactics. The use of permanent injunctions by self or by the other parent were single-item dichotomous variables scored with 0-1 coding. Lower scores on this variable reflected higher use of permanent injunctions. Higher scores on knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors indicated higher knowledge with a range of 22 to 110. The range for parental communication scores was 9 to 45 with higher scores equal to better communication.

Table 12

Comparison of Pretest Group Means

<b>Dependent Measure/Variable</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Cognitive-Behavioral</b>
<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	19.79	19.59
<b>Destructive Conflict Tactics</b>	2.08	1.75
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Self (RELHIS6)</b>	.934	.980
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Other Parent (RELHIS7)</b>	.977	.960
<b>Knowledge of Divorce-Related Parenting Behaviors</b>	76.89	76.13
<b>Parental Communication</b>	16.33	14.75
<b>Child Behavior Problems</b>	8.83	9.26



### Overall Scores on Dependent Measures

Overall scores for pretest and follow-up on the dependent measures for both groups combined can be found in Table 13. No specific hypotheses were formulated for these scores, yet reporting and analysis of what effects the course has on the dependent measures for both groups pooled together appeared to be a necessary gauge of the overall effects of the courses. This appeared particularly indicated due to the limited prior research on divorce parenting classes.

The variable of knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors was the only variable measured on the posttest. The overall mean score for posttest knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors was 96.02 with a standard deviation of 10.23.

Table 13

#### Overall Pretest and Follow-up Scores on Dependent Measures

<b>Dependent Measure/Variable</b>	<b>Interval</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	Pretest	19.39	4.88
	3-Month Follow-up	18.95	5.38
<b>Destructive Conflict Tactics</b>	Pretest	1.90	2.02
	3-Month Follow-up	1.59	1.93

Table 13 (continued)

Overall Pretest and Follow-up Scores on Dependent Measures

<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Self</b>	Pretest (RELHIS6)	.95	.19
	3-Month Follow-up (RELHIS6F)	.98	.10
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Other Parent</b>	Pretest (RELHIS7)	.96	.17
	3-Month Follow-up (RELHIS7F)	.97	.14
<b>Knowledge of Divorce-Related Parenting Behaviors</b>	Pretest	76.41	13.55
	3-Month Follow-up	90.78	12.93
<b>Parental Communication</b>	Pretest	14.93	8.39
	3-Month Follow-up	15.40	8.53
<b>Child Behavior Problems</b>	Pretest	9.16	6.59
	3-Month Follow-up	9.31	6.42

Paired sample  $t$ -tests were conducted to compare change scores for each dependent variable from pretest to three-month follow-up, and for parental knowledge from pretest to posttest. Assessments of the assumptions of normality of the sample and of equal variance were conducted by checking the data compared to expected normal plots and plots of the standardized residuals and were all sufficient. Results of the  $t$ -tests showed that the mean score for posttest

knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors ( $\underline{M} = 96.02$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 10.23$ ) was significantly greater than the mean score for pretest knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors ( $\underline{M} = 76.41$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 13.55$ ),  $t(93) = 15.27$ ,  $p = .000$ . The standardized effect size index,  $\underline{d}$ , was 1.57, a large value. Standardized effect sizes represent "group differences in standard deviation units on the 'normal' distribution" (Kazdin, 1994, p.31). With the normal distribution understood here to be the normal probability curve with 0 at the middle representing 0 standard deviations from the mean. The farther  $\underline{d}$  scores are from 0, the larger the effect size. The average person on the posttest can therefore be interpreted as having performed 42% better than the average person at pretest.

The mean score of follow-up knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors ( $\underline{M} = 90.78$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 12.93$ ) was significantly greater than the mean score for pretest knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors ( $\underline{M} = 76.41$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 13.55$ ),  $t(93) = 10.74$ ,  $p = .000$ . The standardized effect size index,  $\underline{d}$ , for this contrast, was 1.08, a large value. This means that the average person at follow-up is interpreted as having scored 36% better than the average person at pretest. All other paired sample  $t$  tests found no other significant differences between overall pretest to follow-up means.

### **Scores on Dependent Measures by Group**

Mean scores and standard deviations for both groups on all dependent variables are presented below in Table 14. Actual analysis of the study's hypotheses is based on the differences between these scores, which are described in the next section. They are presented here as an aid to readers

interested in reviewing the source of the reported difference scores or replicating the analyses.

Table 14

Dependent Measure Means and Standard Deviations by Group

Dependent Measure/Variable		Group	
		Cognitive	Cognitive-Behavioral
<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	19.17/5.44	19.59/4.36
	3-Month Follow-up Mean/SD	18.23/5.87	19.59/4.88
<b>Destructive Conflict Tactics</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	2.08/2.15	1.75/1.90
	3-Month Follow-up Mean/SD	1.73/1.84	1.46/2.02
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Self (RELHIS6)</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	.93/.24	.98/.14
	3-Month Follow-up/SD	1.00/00	.98/.13
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Other Parent (RELHIS7)</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	.97/.15	.96/.19
	3-Month Follow-up/SD	.97/.14	.98/.13
<b>Parental Communication</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	16.33/9.00	14.75/8.09
	3-Month Follow-up Mean/SD	14.60/8.46	15.01/8.46
<b>Child Behavior Problems</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	8.83/5.79	9.26/7.31
	3-Month Follow-up Mean/SD	8.18/5.48	10.10/7.14

Table 14 (continued)

Dependent Measure Means and Standard Deviations by Group

<b>Dependent Measure/Variable</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>Knowledge of Divorce-Related Parenting Behaviors</b>	Pretest Mean/SD	76.89/12.64	76.13/14.24
	Posttest Mean/SD	95.36/10.38	96.64/10.15
	3-Month Follow-up Mean/SD	90.39/13.19	91.13/12.82

### **Tests of Hypotheses One and Two**

Hypotheses one and two were analyzed using paired-sample *t* tests since they are a comparison between two related means where there was no predicted difference between the two groups (cognitive vs. cognitive-behavioral) on the dependent variables of intimate violence and parental communication respectively (Cohen, 1969). An examination of the assumptions of normality and of equal variance for the variables of intimate violence and parental communication was conducted by checking the data compared to expected normal plots and plots of the standardized residuals. A few standardized residual outliers were noted, yet they were all confirmed as legitimate through an examination of the actual data and they were within an acceptable range. No other potential violations of these assumptions were identified.

Mean scores and *t* test results for the variables of use of permanent injunctions and parental communication are presented below in Table 15.

Table 15

Mean Scores, and t Test Results for Hypotheses One and Two

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>T Test Results</b>
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Self (RELHIS6)</b>	Cognitive Pretest	.934	1.772*
	Cognitive- Follow-up	1.000	
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Self (RELHIS6)</b>	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest	.978	1.000
	Cognitive-Behavioral Follow-up	1.000	
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Other Parent (RELHIS7)</b>	Cognitive Pretest	.977	.000
	Cognitive- Follow-up	.977	
<b>Use of Permanent Injunctions by Other Parent (RELHIS7)</b>	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest	.956	1.430
	Cognitive-Behavioral Follow-up	1.000	
<b>Parental Communication</b>	Cognitive Pretest	16.20	-1.281
	Cognitive- Follow-up	14.82	

Table 15 (continued)

Mean Scores, and t Test Results for Hypotheses One and Two

<b>Parental Communication</b>	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest	14.82	1.713*
	Cognitive-Behavioral Follow-up	15.91	

Note: \* =  $p \leq .10$  , \*\* =  $p \leq .05$  .

Hypothesis 1, stated that there would be no difference in the population mean of intimate violence, as measured by the use of permanent injunctions, for parents in either the cognitive or cognitive-behavioral group from preclass to three months postclass. Three of the four pre to follow-up comparisons reflected no significant change, yet a slight decrease in intimate violence as measured by variable RELHIS6 at Pretest ( $M = .934$ ,  $SD = .24$ ) to RELHIS6 at follow-up ( $M = 1.000$ ,  $SD = .00$ ), was significant,  $t(45) = 1.78$ ,  $p = .083$ . Higher scores on this variable reflect decreased use of permanent injunctions.

Hypothesis 2, proposed that from preclass to follow-up, the population mean of parental communication would improve in both classes. Higher scores on this variable reflect increased parental communication. Parental communication did improve significantly ( $p \leq .10$ ) for the cognitive-behavioral group,  $t(46) = 1.72$ ,  $p = .093$ , yet the comparable scores for the cognitive group did not,  $t(44) = -1.29$ ,  $p = .207$ . The standardized effect size index,  $d$ , was .25, a relatively small value reflecting that the average person in the cognitive

behavioral group reported an 8.5% better communication score at the follow-up, as measured by the Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale, than the average person in the cognitive group.

### **Tests of Hypotheses Three through Eight**

Independent sample t tests were conducted to assess hypotheses three through eight because they test hypotheses about two independent means (Cohen, 1969). In particular, they each compare the average difference on a dependent variable for the cognitive group to the average difference on that same dependent variable for the cognitive-behavioral group.

As applied here, these tests of hypotheses rely on the use of observed difference scores as the measure of change for each dependent variable. For a study that seeks to identify change between two time intervals, the observed difference score is calculated in the following manner (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994, p.244):

$$d_i = x_{i2} - x_{i1} = (t_{i2} + e_{i2}) - (t_{i1} + e_{i1})$$

$i$  = individual

$x_{i1}$  and  $x_{i2}$  = the scores observed at the two time periods

$t_{i1}$  and  $t_{i2}$  = the corresponding true scores

$e_{i1}$  and  $e_{i2}$  = the associated errors of measurement

The use of difference scores has been questioned by some who note that  $x_{i1}$  and  $x_{i2}$  are often correlated over subjects particularly when the time interval between measurements is brief (Campbell, 1981; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). These critics report that this correlation results in difference scores that are



unreliable (Campbell, 1981; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Campbell (1981) notes that the correlation between initial status of a dependent variable and the post-treatment status of that same variable has been known for some time and that Joseph Wilder first identified it within the behavioral sciences in 1931. He reports that Wilder described this correlation as the "Law of Initial Values" (Campbell, 1981, p.85). Campbell (1981) quotes Wilder as stating "the response to agents stimulating the function under investigation depends to a very large extent to the initial level of that function" (p. 86). The relationship between an initial measure of a dependent variable and its follow-up measure or the "Law of Initial Values", has been found to be more profound when there is a close proximity between the two measures (Campbell, 1981).

As a remedy for this correlation, Cohen and Cohen (1983) and Campbell (1981) recommend the use of residual change scores instead of observed difference scores. Residual change scores are standardized scores that are based on a method of partialling  $x_{i1}$  from  $x_{i2}$  (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Although presented as a solution for difficulties with observed difference scores, numerous other problems have been identified as resulting from the use of residual change scores. In particular, the standardizing of the components of a difference scores have been shown to frequently produce spurious results (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Additionally, these standardization methods regularly treat  $x_{i1}$  as if it were the  $t_{i1}$  thereby treating  $x_{i1}$  as if it were error-free (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Other researchers have noted their concern that partialling out pretest information ignores the fact that "the information that the

posttest and pretest have in common is what can be considered as the true score component of the pretest" (Corder-Bolz, 1978, p. 961) or that part of the score which has predictive value. They therefore state "residualized gain scores run the risk of being primarily composed of error variance" (Corder-Bolz, 1978, p. 961).

Given the many concerns also evident with the use of residualized gain scores, and additional factors as noted below, the current study elected to use observed difference scores. Other researchers (i.e., Benjamin, 1973; Nunnally & Bernstein 1994; Overall & Woodward, 1975; Rogosa, Brandt & Zimowski, 1982) have similarly concluded that difference scores are the best measure of change. In fact, Benjamin (1973) notes that physicists have consistently used difference scores in their experiments with no difficulty.

Another factor promoting the use of observed difference scores as the most optimal method of gauging change within the present study included the longer interval between the initial measure and the final measure. As described above, correlation between the initial and follow-up measures is more of a concern when there is a short time period between these measures. All but one of the hypotheses of the current study (i.e., number seven) employs a three-month interval between measures. Moreover, as noted by Rogosa, Brandt & Zimowski (1982), "the often-cited deficiencies of the difference score – low reliability and negative correlation with the initial status- are more illusory than real" (p.735). These researchers report that it cannot be presumed that difference scores are usually unreliable and that "when non-negligible individual

differences are present, the reliability of the difference score is respectable” (Rogosa et al., 1982, p.735).

As a further check of the potential unreliability of difference scores, the researcher computed individual reliabilities of change scores where differences between groups was found (i.e., parental communication and knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors). Contrary to the concerns noted above, the difference score measures for the present study were found to be reliable. Chronbach's alphas for these difference scores were; parental communication,  $\alpha = .67$ , knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors (pretest to posttest),  $\alpha = .72$ , and knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors (pretest to follow-up) ,  $\alpha = .70$ .

The data for hypotheses 3 to 8 were evaluated to assess whether they met the assumptions of normality of the sampling distribution, equal variance, and for the absence of outliers. Examination of expected normal plots compared to distributions of all the dependent variables revealed no evidence for unacceptable abnormality. Individual plots of standardized residuals for each dependent variable and Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated that variances were generally equal. Additionally, a check for the absence of outliers via box plots and standardized residuals less than 3.0 was acceptable.

Kenny and Judd (1986) note that when subjects are examined as part of groups, as is the case in the present study, there is an increased concern that the assumption of independence may be violated. Given these concerns, the researcher conducted one-sample t-tests using the six group mean differences of

the six separate classes for the variables of parental communication and parental knowledge (pretest to posttest and pretest to follow-up). As with the overall tests reported on page 118, the two one sample t-tests for parental knowledge were significantly different from zero. This indicates that the corresponding population group mean differences on parental knowledge may be significantly different from zero. A one-sample t-test of the six parental communication population group means differences was not significant ( $p \geq .05$ ). This finding was consistent with the overall test of all the groups combined for mean differences on parental communication reported on page 119, which was also not significant.

Table 16 presents mean difference scores, and t test results for hypotheses three through eight. As detailed below, all results were non-significant.

Table 16

Difference Scores, and t Test Results for Dependent Variables by Group

Dependent Variable	Group	Mean Difference	t Test Results
<b>Destructive Conflict Tactics:</b>	Cognitive Pretest-Posttest	-.35	-.15
	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest-Posttest	-.29	
<b>Conflicts of Interest:</b>	Cognitive Pretest-Posttest	-.93	-1.01

Table 16 (continued)

Difference Scores, and t Test Results for Dependent Variables by Group

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>t Test Results</b>
	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest-Posttest	.000	
<b>Child Behavior Difficulties:</b>	Cognitive Pretest- Posttest	-.65	-1.35
	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest-Posttest	.86	
<b>Knowledge of Divorce- Related Parenting Behaviors:</b>	Cognitive Pretest- Posttest	18.47	-.86
	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest-Posttest	20.68	
<b>Knowledge of Divorce- Related Parenting Behaviors:</b>	Cognitive Pretest-3 Month Follow-up	13.50	-.56
	Cognitive-Behavioral Pretest-3 Month Follow- up	15.00	

Hypothesis 3, proposing that the population mean of child exposure to conflict would decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral group than it would in the cognitive groups was dropped from the analysis due to low measurement reliability of the 9-item scale from Kramer et al. (1998).

Hypothesis 4, predicted that the population mean of destructive conflict tactics would decrease more in the cognitive behavioral group than it would in the cognitive. Lower scores on this variable indicate lower destructive conflict tactics. The mean differences for both groups were lower, yet here also,  $t$  test results evidenced that there was no significant difference between the groups  $t(96) = -.149, p = .882$ .

Hypothesis 5, stated that the population mean of conflicts of interest would decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral group than it would in the cognitive. Lower scores for this variable reflect more conflicts of interest. Though the difference score for the cognitive group was marginally lower indicating a slight increase in conflicts of interest, there was no change on this variable for the cognitive-behavioral group. However, results of the  $t$  test exhibited no significant differences between the groups  $t(96) = -1.01, p = .315$ .

Hypothesis 6, held that the population mean of child behavior difficulties would decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral group than in the cognitive group. Higher scores on this variable indicate more child behavior problems. The cognitive group mean scores for child behavior problems did decreased minimally, while the scores for the cognitive-behavioral group increased slightly. Yet, there was no significant difference between the groups  $t(90) = -1.34, p = .181$ .

Hypotheses 7 and 8 predicted that the population mean of knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors would increase more in the cognitive group than in the cognitive-behavioral group from pretest to posttest and pretest to

follow-up. The study results did not find a significant difference between the cognitive and the cognitive-behavioral groups, with  $t(92) = -.859$ ,  $p = .392$  for the group differences from pretest to posttest, and  $t(96) = -.560$ ,  $p = .577$  from pretest to follow-up.

### **Analysis of the Effects of Group Status and Covariates on the Dependent Variables**

For hypotheses 9 and 10, ANCOVA was used to compare the difference in outcome means across the groups for the dependent variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Gender, ethnicity, prior participation in divorce mediation, and history of intimate violence, as measured by the use of permanent injunctions, were used as covariates.

The appropriate use of ANCOVA assumes that the residuals are independently and normally distributed with zero means and the same variance. These assumptions were all checked via an examination of expected normal plots compared to distributions of all the dependent variables. This check revealed no evidence of unacceptable abnormality or problems of equal variance. ANCOVA also assumes that there is homogeneity (equality) of regression slopes within the analysis. This was tested through a model containing the main effects of group and the dependent variables, as well as the interactions between these variables. None of these interactions were found to be significant at the .05 level, thus there was no evidence of a violation of the equal slopes assumption.

Hypothesis 9, proposed that after controlling for gender, ethnicity, prior participation in mediation and prior history of intimate violence, subjects who received the cognitive-behavioral intervention would report significantly less child exposure to conflict (9a), destructive conflict tactics (9b), conflicts of interest (9c), and child behavior problems (9d) than subjects receiving the cognitive intervention. As noted earlier, the variable of child exposure to conflict (9a) was dropped from the analysis due to low measurement reliability. ANCOVA results for the remaining three dependent variables can be found in Tables 17 to 19. No significant effects for group status or the covariates on the variables of destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, or child behavior problems were found.

The decision to include all of the hypothesized covariates in the ANCOVA, even though some of them had been shown to not have significant effects in the earlier analysis, was done to assure that any unique effects that they may have on group status would be identified. As described in Chapter Two, the covariates of intimate violence and prior participation in divorce mediation have been shown in multiple previous studies to have effects on the three dependent variables under examination.



Table17

Results of ANCOVA Using Pretest-Follow-up Destructive Conflict Tactics Scores

Source of Variation	F	Sig. of F (p value)	Effect Size(Eta <sup>2</sup> )
Group Status	.012	.912	.000
Gender	.493	.485	.006
Ethnicity	.375	.542	.004
Divorce Mediation	.238	.627	.003
RELHIS6	.639	.426	.007
RELHIS7	1.793	.184	.020

Note:  $R^2 = .037$

Table 18

Results of ANCOVA Using Pretest-Follow-up Conflicts of Interest Scores

Source of Variation	F	Sig. of F (p value)	Effect Size(Eta <sup>2</sup> )
Group Status	1.465	.229	.016
Gender	.625	.431	.007
Ethnicity	2.611	.110	.029
Divorce Mediation	1.190	.278	.013
RELHIS6	.636	.427	.007
RELHIS7	.002	.967	.000

Note:  $R^2 = .068$

Table 19

Results of ANCOVA Using Pretest-Follow-up Child Behavior Problems Scores

Source of Variation	F	Sig. of F (p value)	Effect Size(Eta <sup>2</sup> )
Group Status	1.395	.241	.016
Gender	3.167	.079	.036
Ethnicity	.054	.817	.001
Divorce Mediation	.269	.605	.003
RELHIS6	.468	.496	.006
RELHIS7	1.830	.180	.021

Note:  $R^2 = .066$

Hypothesis 10, predicted that after controlling for gender, ethnicity, prior participation in mediation, and prior history of intimate violence, group status would not significantly effect reported levels of intimate violence (10a) and parental communication (10b). ANCOVA results for Hypothesis 10a (use of permanent injunctions by self and use of permanent injunctions by other parent) and Hypothesis 10b (parental communication) can be found in Tables 20 to 22. Consistent with the direction hypothesized, no significant effects, other than the pretest measure of use of permanent injunctions with the difference score on that same variable, were found for group status or for the covariates.

Table 20

Results of ANCOVA Using Pretest-Follow-up Use of Permanent Injunctions by Self (RELHIS6) Scores

Source of Variation	F	Sig. of F (p value)	Effect Size(Eta <sup>2</sup> )
Group Status	.787	.377	.009
Gender	.711	.402	.008
Ethnicity	.040	.841	.000
Divorce Mediation	.059	.808	.001
RELHIS6	335.15	.000	.792
RELHIS7	.004	.952	.000

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = .802

Table21

Results of ANCOVA Using Pretest-Follow-up Use of Permanent Injunctions by  
Other Parent (RELHIS7) Scores

Source of Variation	F	Sig. of F (p value)	Effect Size(Eta <sup>2</sup> )
Group Status	.109	.742	.001
Gender	.430	.514	.005
Ethnicity	.026	.873	.000
Divorce Mediation	.039	.844	.000
RELHIS6	.081	.777	.001
RELHIS7	65.559	.000	.427

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = .450

Table 22

Results of ANCOVA Using Pretest-Follow-up Parental Communication Scores

Source of Variation	F	Sig. of F (p value)	Effect Size(Eta <sup>2</sup> )
Group Status	2.463	.120	.028
Gender	.809	.371	.009
Ethnicity	.351	.555	.004
Divorce Mediation	1.237	.269	.014
RELHIS6	.000	.998	.000
RELHIS7	2.869	.094	.032

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = .086

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This final chapter presents some synthesis and interpretation of the results and data analysis found in chapter four. Overall interpretations of the statistical analysis are provided along with a discussion of each of the study's ten hypotheses. Included in this discussion is an examination of the internal and external validity of the results along with the evident limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research are also provided. The chapter closes with a discussion of the implications of the study for social work practice and research.

The study was highly successful in both recruiting and retaining subjects. The final retention rate of 85% of subjects who began the study through the three-month follow-up instrument exemplifies the potential of conducting research of mandated interventions. It also highlights the benefits of innovative follow-up methods with highly mobile subjects along with offering them tangible participant incentives.

In general, few differences were found between the cognitive and cognitive-behavioral courses on the study's dependent variables while rather

strong evidence was discovered showing that both courses increased parent's knowledge of how best to relate to their child, and their child's other parent, during and after the divorce process. Additionally, some evidence was found showing that these two courses did not increase intimate violence, as measured by the self-reported use of permanent injunctions by divorcing parents.

### **Interpretations of the Statistical Analysis**

This study attempted to replicate several elements of Kramer et al.'s (1998) research in an effort to see if their results could be reproduced. Several design changes were made from Kramer et al.'s investigation with the hope of rectifying some of the conceptual and procedural flaws identified in that study. Based on Kramer et al.'s (1998) findings, and other rationale found in clinical theory, the present study principally hypothesized that cognitive-behaviorally based divorce-parenting classes would be more effective than cognitive-based classes at decreasing children's reported exposure to conflict, destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest and parental reports of child behavior problems. The current study secondarily hypothesized that neither class would increase intimate violence, and that there would be no difference in self reported intimate violence predicted by cognitive-behaviorally based courses as opposed to cognitive-based divorce-parenting classes.

Data analysis using paired sample  $t$  tests examined the overall effects of both classes together on the dependent variables. The results of this analysis indicated that when their scores are combined, classes had no significant effect on the variables of use of permanent injunctions, destructive conflict tactics,

parental communication, and child behavior problems. However, rather strong evidence was found indicating that the courses increased parental knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors not only from pretest to posttest, but from pretest to three-month follow-up. The magnitude of effect sizes of these increases in parental knowledge (i.e.,  $d = 1.57$  for pretest to posttest and  $d = 1.08$  for pretest to follow-up) were large. These effect sizes are larger than the pretest to three-month follow-up improvements in parental knowledge found by Kramer et al. (1998). Their effect sizes were,  $d = .68$  for skills-based classes and  $.67$  for information-based classes from preclass to their three month follow-up. Kramer et al's eight-item instrument for this variable sought to gauge knowledge with items similar to those measured in the present study. Consequently, it appears that based on the prior study by Kramer et al., and our current investigation, there is growing evidence that these courses can improve parental knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors.

Both studies also provide findings reflecting that parents are retaining their increased knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors three months after course attendance. It would be difficult to claim that such impressive increases in knowledge for these specific parenting behaviors have come from any other source other than parental participation in the course. If the effect sizes were small then it could be argued that one would see similar improvements in parental knowledge regarding these behaviors due to each parent's own learning and adjustment to the divorce. Yet, as reported above, the effect sizes for both

examinations are not small and therefore cannot be easily explained as a result of normal increases in knowledge.

Hypothesis 1, predicting that there would be no difference in the population mean of intimate violence, as defined by the use of permanent injunctions, for parents in either the cognitive or cognitive-behavioral group from pre-class to three months post-class was largely supported by the data. Of the four pre to post comparisons only one changed significantly, which actually represented a slight decrease in intimate violence. This minimal decrease however has arguably no practical significance with a small standardized effect size of  $d = .26$ . Also, only four (or 4.1% of the entire sample,  $n=98$ ) parents answered this question at the pretest with the response of yes noting that they had initiated a permanent injunction. This number decreased to one (or 1% of the entire sample,  $n=98$ ) for the posttest.

Hypothesis 2, proposing that from pre-class to post-class, the population mean of parental communication will improve in both classes was only partially supported by the findings. Kramer et al. (1998) found significant improvements in parental communication for both of their courses from pretest to the three-month follow-up with the skills-based group having an ES of .61 and the information-based group having an ES of .64. Although by a more liberal standard of  $p \leq .10$ , parental communication did improve significantly for the cognitive-behavioral group in the current study, ( $t(46) = 1.72, p = .093$ ), the cognitive group did not, ( $t(44) = -1.28, p = .207$ ). The standardized effect size index,  $d$ , was .25, a small value. The improvement in the cognitive-behavioral group was not significant at

the traditional level of .05. However, the .10 level of significance is frequently employed to evaluate exploratory hypotheses that are clearly defined prior to the onset of an investigation (Kazdin, 1994), as is the case with the present study. With respect to the question of practical importance of this improvement, it can be argued that the increase is generally small especially given the smaller effect size. However, since divorcing parents have been shown to have extreme difficulty communicating, the case can be made that any improvements in parental communication have some practical importance and may deserve further attention in future research.

Hypothesis 3, predicting that the population mean of child exposure to conflict would decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral group than it would in the cognitive group was dropped from the study because of low measurement reliability.

Hypothesis 4, predicting that the population mean of destructive conflict tactics would decrease more in the cognitive behavioral group than it would in the cognitive was not supported. Although both groups had marginally lower levels of destructive conflict tactics at the follow-up measure, no significant differences between the groups were found. Kramer et al. (1998) did not measure this dependent variable.

Hypothesis 5, predicting that the population mean of conflicts of interest would decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral group than it would in the cognitive was not supported. There was a minimal increase in conflicts of interest for the cognitive group, yet there was no change on this variable for the



cognitive-behavioral group. Here again, no significant difference between the groups was discovered. This variable was not included in the study by Kramer et al. (1998).

Hypothesis 6, proposing that the population mean of child behavior difficulties would decrease more in the cognitive-behavioral group than in the cognitive group was not supported. Child behavior problems for the cognitive group did moderately decrease, while the scores for the cognitive-behavioral group increased slightly. However, there was no significant difference between the groups. These findings are consistent with Kramer et al. (1998). They also found that child behavior problems did not significantly change during the course of their study, nor did they find any differences between the groups.

Hypotheses 7 and 8, predicting that the population mean of knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors would increase more in the cognitive group than in the cognitive-behavioral group from pretest to posttest and from pretest to follow-up were not supported. As reported earlier, overall scores for the two groups combined increased significantly from pretest to posttest with both groups retaining a significant increase in knowledge at the three-month follow-up. However, there was not a significant difference between the groups from pretest to posttest, and from pretest to follow-up. Kramer et al. (1998) also reported that parental knowledge improved for both of their groups, yet the effect size was only slightly larger for their skills-based group ( $ES = .68$ ) compared to their information group ( $ES = .67$ ).

Hypothesis 9, proposing that after controlling for gender, ethnicity, prior participation in mediation and intimate violence, as measured by prior history of use of permanent injunctions, subjects who received the cognitive-behavioral intervention would report significantly less destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, and child behavior problems than subjects receiving the cognitive intervention was not supported. In summary, for each of the three dependent variables (i.e., destructive conflict tactics, conflicts of interest, or child behavior problems), none of the F tests of effect controlling for each of the others were significant.

Hypothesis 10, predicting that after controlling for gender, ethnicity, prior participation in mediation, and prior history of intimate violence, as measured by the use of permanent injunctions, group status would not significantly affect reported levels of intimate violence and parental communication was supported by the findings. As hypothesized, group status was not predictive of changes in intimate violence, or parental communication. No significant effects, other than the prior use of permanent injunctions with the ongoing use of them, were found for group status or for the covariates. In fact, much of the variance in the model is attributable to the covariate of prior use of permanent injunctions. This indicates that the prior use of permanent injunctions in comparison to group status or the other covariates, is far more predictive of the ongoing need for permanent injunctions than these other independent variables.

The Multiple  $R^2$  values of .80 and .45 for the two ANCOVA models measuring intimate violence means that 80% and 45% of the variance for each of

these tests was accounted for by their complete model. Unlike the current study, Kramer et al. (1998) did not employ a data analysis technique that allowed them to include the simultaneous effects of the covariates. Although limited by a narrower definition of intimate violence as the use of permanent injunctions, the finding here that intimate violence is not affected by group status is in some ways more meaningful since this study employs an outcome measure of violence. The fact that both studies consistently found no increase in intimate violence due to the class or any differences between the group effects on intimate violence suggests that some of the concerns about the impact of courses on intimate violence may now be alleviated.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Evident limitations of the present study are discussed below in relation to Kerlinger's "maxmincon principle" (1986, p. 286). This design principle calls for the researcher to maximize systematic (or experimental) variance in the study, control extraneous variance, and minimize error variance (Kerlinger, 1986). Limits to the study's external validity are also discussed in this section.

#### **Maximization of Systematic Variance**

In spite of the researcher's efforts to assure the presence of distinct differences between the two courses as a means of maximizing the effect of treatments, it appears that the study was not as successful at this as was hoped. Kerlinger (1986) emphasizes the importance of maximizing systematic (i.e., experimental) variance in order to increase internal validity. For the present study, this meant confirming that the instructional techniques of cognitive versus

cognitive-behavioral were carried out as differently as possible. This was done through strict attention to standardization including the development and use of two distinct and precise instructor manuals, extensive and separate instructor training for each class, and close monitoring of the consistency of the courses being provided. However, systemic factors limited the extent to which the courses could differ. Under mandates by Florida Law, class length and content were closely restricted by Florida's Minimum Curriculum Standards for Divorce Parenting Courses. Although it is unclear whether freeing the researcher to alter these elements of the course and the methodology would have revealed more differences in effects between the groups, it is clear that given the restrictions of what is now mandated for these courses, efforts to maximize the systematic variance were somewhat impaired.

#### Control of Extraneous Variance

An additional limitation of the study is the evident differences between instructors. The researcher implemented a number of design techniques to minimize and monitor these differences to include matching instructors based on observations of their abilities and monitoring the consistency of the courses. Yet, there were areas of variation between the instructors that the researcher was not able to control for. In particular, differences were discovered between instructors regarding their views toward divorce and religion. There also was evident variance between each instructor's individual histories of teaching the course. Although four of the five instructors reported that they had strongly held religious beliefs, one of these four also stated the belief that divorce should be available

only to couples experiencing desertion, domestic violence, substance abuse, or any other serious problem. These differences, along with the fact that two instructors had been divorced while three had not, may have precipitated some unwanted variation in how the course material was presented to parents. Any effect of having two divorced instructors appears to be rather balanced since they each taught different classes. The one instructor's view that divorce should be available in only a few limited situations likely also had some effect on how that instructor taught the course.

Gender differences between the instructor teams (i.e., one both female and the other male and female) could arguably account for some of the variation seen between subjects in the study. The researcher was unsuccessful in altering the gender makeup of the instructor teams during the study. Although such control over instructor gender may have been helpful with respect to the study's internal validity, this may have modified the course so that it would have not been representative of similar classes taught nationwide since many courses are taught by males. Still, whether such a modification would have resulted in a decrease in external validity is somewhat unclear since previous research of divorce-parenting programs nationwide has not gathered comprehensive information regarding instructor gender.

Another limitation of the study relates to the need for the back-up instructor to co-teach all three of the cognitive courses. As described earlier, the two teams of instructors had been formulated based on observations of their teaching competencies done prior to the onset of the study. The cognitive-

behavioral team remained intact throughout the duration of the investigation, yet the cognitive team did not. This unplanned change likely reduced the effectiveness of the matching of the teams and consequently increased some of the unexplained variation in effects on the dependent variables. It may have also decreased the effectiveness of the cognitive group.

Inclusion of the independent variables of participation in divorce mediation and a history of intimate violence likely helped the study control some extraneous variance, yet the study failed to include the variable of parental participation in individual or family therapy. The exclusion of the effects of such treatment, which has been recurrently shown to be associated with changes in the study's dependent variables, reflects an area where the study clearly did not control a potential source of extraneous variance.

#### Minimization of Error Variance

The reliability (i.e., Cronbach's alpha) of several key measures for the study were below the conventionally acceptable level of .70. In particular, measures for pretest destructive conflict tactics, pretest child exposure to conflict, and posttest child exposure to conflict did not meet the .70 threshold. These lower Cronbach alphas indicate that these measures were not tight enough to capture what the researcher was looking to for. The measures of child exposure to conflict were dropped, yet the pretest destructive conflict tactics measure was retained since it was close the threshold. Despite the fact that some other measures in the study (i.e., the PCEI and the BRIC) exceeded the threshold by a considerable margin, it can be argued that the acceptance of the pretest

destructive conflicts measure increased the error variance of the analysis related to these variables. The problem of increased error variance has been defined as a factor in decreasing internal validity (Kerlinger, 1986). It also highlights the need for further development of more precise and reliable instruments specifically designed to gauge multiple important individual and family variables for divorcing families. Wherever measurement error is an issue, final judgement regarding interpretations of data (whether significant or non-significant findings) are suspect.

The study's results are also somewhat limited since the more complete measure of intimate violence, the three-item scale from Newmark, Harrell and Salem (1995), had to be excluded from all analysis and results due to its rather low reliabilities (i.e.,  $\alpha = .43$  for the pretest and  $\alpha = .36$  for the posttest). With this measure dropped from the study, the only measures left of intimate violence were the two one-item scales inquiring about the need and use of permanent injunctions. These are important self-report outcome measures of intimate violence, yet they clearly do not cover the full range of behaviors that were captured in the items that had to be dropped, which detailed specific acts of abuse and maltreatment. Some precursor components of intimate violence are no doubt addressed in the variable of destructive conflict tactics. However, these items do not cover the specific behaviors that are generally associated with intimate violence.

An additional limitation of the study is the possibility that the evident increases in scores on parental knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors

may be due to the confounding effects of the pretest on the posttest and the follow-up. These increases could be a result of instrument reactivity. Yet, there are several factors suggesting that if such confounding influences were present, their effects were only minimal. In particular, parents in both classes still had significantly higher scores at the three-month follow-up compared to the pretest. Subject memory of, or familiarity with, the pretest and posttest instrument that took a maximum of 15 minutes to complete would likely be quite limited after three months. Kramer et al. (1998), who also found similar increases in parental knowledge for parent's attending divorce-parenting classes, noted that subjects in their comparison group did not show a significant increase in knowledge three month after the initial measure. In general, it seems unlikely that much of the differences would be attributable to effects of the pretest, but future investigations should seek to employ designs such as the Solomon four-group design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) which allow the researcher to control for the impact of the pretest.

#### Limits to External Validity

A major limitation of the study is its limited external validity. External validity is generalization beyond the current study and sample (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). External validity can be weakened or compromised if the conditions in the study differ from those in the generalization (Spector, 1981). Even though only limited generalizability was claimed as feasible from the onset of the present study, it is important to clarify the study's limited external



validity again here so that other researchers do not misinterpret the relevance of the current findings.

A distinction can be made between two different components of external validity "(1) generalizing to particular target persons, settings, and times, and (2) generalizing across types of persons, settings and times" (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 73). Since the present study employed a nonprobability sample it is not possible to claim the first type of external validity or that the results from the investigation can be inferred to apply to any population or sampling frame. Any claim of external validity here is also limited by the fact that only little comparative information was available regarding parents who declined participation in the study. Although, these concerns greatly limit the generalizability of the study they are common problems found in field studies and those in the behavioral sciences where random sampling is rarely possible and where participation in treatments is often mandated. What is claimed more often in such field studies is the second element of external validity listed above or "one of generalizing across haphazard instances where similar-appearing treatments are implemented" (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 73). In such studies, Cook & Campbell (1979) have argued that external validity is improved through a number of smaller investigations with such haphazard samples all focused on similar questions versus a large single study.

One factor increasing the potential for achieving this second type of external validity is that both courses were based on the State of Florida's Minimum Curriculum Standards. Adding to the value of this assertion is the fact

that all course instructors reported a high level of consistency between the course instructor manuals and what was actually taught in the course. Additionally, the present study was successful in replicating several of Kramer et al's (1998) methods with some similar results (i.e., increases in parental knowledge and no evidence of increases in intimate violence after attending the courses). Like the current study, Kramer et al's research was also conducted in the state of Florida. Given all these factors, some limited claim toward generalizability to other courses taught in Florida could be made. However, an additional concern restricting this generalization relates to the high divorce rate reported in Bay County where the study was conducted. Arguably, the higher divorce rate among the sample may reflect the presence of factors unique to the Bay County, such as different attitudes toward divorce, which might precipitate the frequency of individuals ending their marriages.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The present study sought to measure the effects of two divorce parenting courses three months after participant parents completed the class. Knowing the effects at this relatively short three-month interval is important, yet very little is still understood about what impact divorce-parenting courses have in the later months and years after parents attend these programs. To date, no longitudinal empirical investigation of divorce-parenting interventions has been accomplished. Of particular interest would be discovering how long significant increases in parental knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors, as found in the present study, are retained by parents. If parents were able remember the

information they learned from the course over time a longer period of time (i.e., one to two years), it would be of value to know whether they were to demonstrate improvements in the other dependent variables of the study. A case could be made that with more practice over time of using the information they learned from the course, that divorced parents might be able to function in ways that helped their children adjust better to the divorce. Additionally, if such a longitudinal study continued to follow-up with individuals parents over time at multiple intervals, then more precise data analysis techniques such as Hierarchical Linear Models (Nugent, 1996) or Growth Curve Modeling (Willet, Ayoub & Robinson, 1991) could be employed. These techniques would allow the researcher to examine multi-dimensional changes in individual and family functioning over time with far greater depth of understanding.

Extending the duration of investigations into divorce-parenting classes would clearly add to the depth and complexity of the data received, yet it admittedly comes with a price. Such a longitudinal study would not only be susceptible to all the limitations existing in the current study, but it also increases the potential that history and maturation might threaten the study's internal validity (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Yet, a case could be made that that there is value in such history as it reflects what occurs in the lives of divorcing parents during the critical time period after the end of their divorce. With repeated measures, the possibility of instrument reactivity also becomes a greater concern (Cook & Campbell, 1979). In spite of these concerns, implementation of a longitudinal study in which the researcher would be free to accentuate the

differences between both class techniques, while at the same time having judicial support for a true control group, appears needed.

Conceivably, the failure to find statistically significant differences between the two courses was due to a lack of measurement precision. Further work on the development of more accurate and reliable instruments specifically tailored to divorcing families is clearly needed. Many of the instruments employed in this study, although selected because they were written for divorcing families, had only been used on a few studies prior to their use here. As a means of overcoming such measurement problems, future investigations of divorce-parenting programs should place renewed attention on including other indicators of intimate violence (i.e., behavioral observations, tracking of future interactions with the courts or law enforcement).

The current finding that parental knowledge of divorce-related parenting behaviors increases and is maintained three months after course attendance provides some evidence regarding the actual effects of these programs. However, as is true with any exploratory investigation, it is important that future studies look at whether these results can be replicated. Replication is vital to the building of a knowledge base regarding interventions with divorcing families. The current study, with its clearly delineated definitions, measures and techniques, is highly amenable to being replicated by other researchers (Rosen, Proctor & Staudt, 1999).

Kerlinger (1986) emphasizes the importance of controlling variables extraneous to the purpose of a study. The need to manage the threats of history

and maturation on internal validity has also been underscored as vital to studies in behavioral sciences (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Control groups remain the primary design mechanism available to researchers to manage the effects of these factors. The present study took numerous steps beyond what previous studies had done to handle such variance. These steps included the use of clearly defined instructor manuals, expanded instructor training, monitoring of instructor biases, detailing the consistency of treatment provision, matching instructors based on observations, and random assignment of subjects to groups. Yet, the study did not contain a control group nor has any empirical investigation completed thus far had one. The use of "demographically similar" comparison groups can be found in the literature, yet these groups remain suspect to questions of actual comparability to parents attending courses.

The findings of the current study have now highlighted the clear need for true control groups in future studies of divorce parenting classes. As described in Chapter 2, the primary etiology of divorce-parenting classes has arisen from a mix of community and political forces wanting to address the needs of children of divorce. Even though the popularity of these programs has grown tremendously over the last five years, with many judges and legislators now mandating parents to attend them, it still is unclear if the courses actually produce any benefits for children. This dilemma demonstrates the need for future researchers of these classes to work to persuade policy makers to insist that investigations with true control groups must be done. Until such controlled studies are accomplished, it is evident that instructors, clinicians, judges and legislators cannot claim that they

have a true sense of what effects these classes have on the families of parents being mandated to attend them.

Given the remaining questions about the impact of these courses, especially as they relate to children, it also appears necessary that future investigations seek to find ways to include children as part of the study. Facilitating the participation of children in a study of mandated classes for adults appears particularly challenging. Yet, one way that this might be done is by offering free child-care during the provision of the class to parents who agree to have their children interviewed or observed at play. Classes nationwide are most commonly offered on Saturdays when many day care facilities and schools are often closed (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). Thus, free day care may be an attractive incentive for participation. Follow-up interviews or observations might have to occur at the child's school or day care setting. Arguably, a number of parents would likely not want their child to participate, but other incentives, such as the cash reimbursement incentive provided in the current study, along with regular follow-up with participant parents, might act as a sufficient inducement. Additionally, interviewing the parents to find out what would make a difference for them might also be useful.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice and Research**

Although the findings of this study are mixed, this investigation represents a clear example of the type of outcome focused intervention research that many within the profession of social work have been calling for (Rosen, Proctor & Staudt, 1999; Schilling, 1997). The general absence of studies that are both

replicable and usable by social workers in the field has been well documented (Gambri, 1994; Rosen, Proctor & Staudt, 1999; Schilling, 1997). In spite of the fact that social workers remain the predominant mental health profession providing these courses, only one study of divorce-parenting courses prior to the present investigation (i.e., Frieman, Garon & Mandel, 1994) was designed and conducted by a social worker.

As called for by Rosen, Proctor and Staudt (1999), and Schilling (1997), the high level of collaboration achieved in the present study between the agency providing these courses and the researcher, along with the close attention paid to describing detailed practitioner functions, have resulted in a study that has practical value for social workers. Agency staff, to include instructors, administrators, clerical and registration personnel, were deeply involved in the planning and development of the project. The substantive engagement of the key individuals carrying out the intervention at the test site undoubtedly precipitated overall cooperation with the study, thereby allowing the research to be conducted in a virtually problem-free manner. An evident example of this is the high level of consistency reported by instructors between the manualized course guidelines developed by the researcher and what was actually taught during each course.

The early involvement of the instructors in the manual development process and post-class debriefings likely had some impact on increasing their acceptance of the new material and their willingness to teach it in different ways, resulting in increased reported consistency. However, such high-level

collaboration does come with some risks and costs. Along with the increased involvement of instructors, and other key personnel in the research process, comes the potential that these individuals may begin to function in different ways than they normally would in the absence of the study, thereby altering the intervention. If this occurs, the resulting changes to the intervention decrease both the internal and external validity of the findings.

This research can now be used by social workers as they attempt to either provide divorce-parenting classes or develop research into their effectiveness. Social work practitioners can use the clearly defined instructor manuals to set-up courses of their own. The findings might be also used by some to argue for reductions in the number of parents attending each course or increasing the length of the classes. One of the primary benefits for social workers resulting from the study is the further development of the Parenting Course Evaluation Instrument (PCEI) which has now been shown to have consistently high reliability for both the current study and a prior investigation (i.e., Capshaw , Whitworth & Abell, 2000).

The 85% final retention rate for subjects completing the study through the three-month follow-up is almost unheard of in the behavioral sciences. Prior to the start of the investigation, it was believed that at least half of the initial participants would not complete the follow-up. This was based on retention rates of prior studies and the known high level of mobility of divorcing families. The high rate of return at three months seen in this study was particularly surprising since parents are mandated to attend these classes. Parents were clearly told



three times, both verbally and in writing, that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could discontinue their participation at any time. The \$25.00 reimbursements paid to subjects upon completion of the third survey was likely a primary factor hastening this high retention rate. However, the use of reminder notices, pre-addressed and stamped change of address cards, and follow-up calls to subjects to confirm their receipt of the three-month survey also played a role in bringing about this retention rate. These practices highlight the value of social work researchers taking extra steps to ease the ability of subjects to participate in research projects.

In summary, few differences were discovered between the cognitive and cognitive-behavioral courses on the study's dependent variables. Numerous results were in the direction anticipated by the researcher, yet they were not statistically significant. Parental communication did improve significantly more in the cognitive-behavioral class, yet the differences were rather slight. In spite of concerns that encouraging communication between divorcing parents might increase the occurrence of intimate violence between them, little evidence was found to support such a claim. Consistent with prior findings (i.e., Kramer et al, 1998) some results reflected that the divorce-parenting courses under investigation here did not increase the reported incidence of intimate violence, as measured by the use of permanent injunctions by the divorcing parents.

Given these conclusions, some may infer that due to the minimal differences seen between the cognitive and cognitive-behavioral groups, that the choice of which instructional technique to use for providing these courses does

not matter. There may be some limited evidence for this here, yet social work practitioners are reminded of the limitation noted earlier, that due to the restrictions imposed on these courses by the State of Florida Minimum Curriculum Standards, that only moderate variation between the classes was obtainable. Thus, it cannot be said that cognitive and cognitive-behavioral techniques have the same effect on the dependent variables when these techniques are employed in divorce-parenting classes. A similar point should be made with respect to the "level of dosage" of the two theories provided in these classes. By state mandates, all divorce-parenting classes cannot exceed four hours. This is arguably a brief exposure to either cognitive or cognitive-behavioral treatments in practice and therefore should not be used to support any claim that use of the two theories will have the similar results in another study.

A final question deserving further attention concerns whether gains in knowledge constitute enough justification for the continued mandating of these courses. If such knowledge does not translate into behaviors that help children adjust to their parents divorce, then how can social workers ethically be actively involved in the provision and support of these courses. The primary conceptual justification for divorce-parenting classes has arisen from the belief that if parents can be sensitized to both the impairing consequences of their open conflict with each other, and to the unique needs of their children during and after the divorce process, they will act to change their behaviors. The findings of the current study have shown that this assumption may be flawed. Parental knowledge of how

best to help their children did improve, yet no convincing evidence was found to show that these changes in knowledge resulted in changes in parental behaviors. Thus, concerns about unrealistic expectations regarding the benefits of divorce-parenting classes voiced by other researchers (i.e., Salem et al., 1996; Walker, 1993) appear to have some merit.

Admittedly, further research that includes true control groups, specific measures of child outcomes, longer courses, and examinations of more long-term effects must be done. Nonetheless, if courses do not result in producing some of the outcomes they were created for, then changes to these courses should be made or resources should be shifted to other programs that have been shown to actually change behaviors.

Reducing the number of parents attending each class and adding to course length would give parents a better opportunity to practice the skills they are being taught. At the same time, these changes would allow researchers to conduct studies comparing the effects of these more expanded courses to more traditional divorce-parenting classes. Some consideration should also be given to conducting classes only for children or for having classes for children at the same time that their parents are attending a course.

Another option that should be considered is focusing attention and resources primarily on the families where we know there is a high level of conflict. Family courts are aware of families that have required repeated relitigation to resolve conflicts. They also know when intimate violence has been reported in divorcing families. Expanded and intensive divorce-parenting classes

for high-conflict parents have shown some promise at reducing conflict and improving child functioning (Kibler, Sanchez, & Baker-Jackson, 1994; McIsaac & Finn, 1999).

Future research, modeled in part on the successes and shortcomings of this study, should increase the likelihood of relevant and effective service delivery for parents and children facing the all too common challenges of divorce.

**Appendix A:**  
**Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-  
Parenting Education Programs**

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Arbuthnot & Gordon (1996)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) Does mandatory divorce education for parents work?  (H) Mandatory attendance at a skills-based divorce parenting classes will decrease child exposure to conflict.	Study assigned 48 parents to skills-based course and 23 to a comparison group. Parents were not randomly assigned. Six-month follow-up completed with both groups. *Group 1: 0 X 01 02 Group 2: 0 0 01 02	Sample = parents filing for divorce in a rural county in Ohio. N=131, 53% female, predominately Caucasian Mean education = 12.8 years Children = 1.8 mean Age = 33.3 years Separated = 14.9 months mean	Parents attending divorce-parenting program reported decreases in child exposure to conflict and reduced frequency of child being placed in the middle of the conflict.	Lack of random assignment of subject impairs generalizability of findings.  Data analysis requires more than two-tailed tests. Use of ANOVA would have allowed for comparison of the two groups.  Study highlights need for a standardized divorce parenting measurement tool.
DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT			
Two-tailed test only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured interview</li> <li>• Written post-class assessment</li> <li>• No standardized measures employed.</li> </ul>			

\*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable)  
R = Random Assignment of Subjects  
0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Arbuthnot, Kramer, & Gordon (1996)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) What is the impact of a divorce parenting education program on postdecree relitigation?  (H) Parents who attend a skills-based divorce parenting class will not require relitigation as much as parents who do not attend a course.	Study assigned 89 parents to a skills-based course and 23 to a comparison group. Parents were not randomly assigned. Six-month follow-up completed with both groups. Relitigation data was obtained from court records for 24 to 27 months after course completion.  *Group 1: 0 X 01 02  Group 2: 0 01 02	Sample = parents filing for divorce in a rural county in Ohio. N=112, 53% female, predominately Caucasian Mean education = 12.8 years Children = 1.8 mean Age = 33.3 years Separated = 14.9 months mean	Parents who did not attend the course had a relitigation rate more than twice as high (3.74 filings versus 1.61 filings) as compared to the treatment group.  No relationships were found between parent's level of education, several child outcome variables, and relitigation rate.	The study employs a credible design in indicated some linkage between course attendance and post-decree relitigation.  Studies' use of ANCOVA allowed not only for the comparison of means across the two different groups, also for examinations of other possible covariates (i.e. level of education and child variables).
DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT			
ANCOVA – Between groups, treatment and comparison.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured interview</li> <li>Rate of relitigation</li> </ul>			

\*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable) 0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Frieman, Garon, and Mandell (1994)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) What impact do divorce-parenting classes have on parent's attitudes toward their children?  (H) Course attendance will increase parent's awareness of the impact of divorce on their children.	Parents completed a questionnaire and after attending a divorce-parenting seminar. This is a one-group pretest-posttest design:  *01 X 02	Study uses a purposive sample of 66 divorcing parents who attended a particular divorce-parenting seminar in Maryland. No other information regarding the sample is given.	Parents reported that the seminar increased their knowledge regarding the effects of divorce on children, how children cope with divorce, and improved their understanding of their children's coping.  Design does not control for other possible impacting variables of divorce.  Design allows for possible interaction of selection maturation and testing.	Findings are encouraging, yet should be considered with caution due to the pre-experimental design.  Problems with internal validity  Design does not control for other possible impacting variables of divorce.  Design allows for possible interaction of selection maturation and testing.
<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>  Two tailed tests only	<b>MEASUREMENT</b>  Nonstandardized instrument created by the researchers with no prior application or tests of validity or reliability			

\*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable)      0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)



Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Kurkowski, Gordon, & Arbuthnot (1993)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) What impact does divorce parenting information have on the frequency of children being involved in parental conflict?  (H) Children would be placed in the middle of parental conflict less if their parents obtained information about the impact this has on them.	The study uses a pretest-post-test control group design(2 control groups). Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the three groups.  *Group 1:R 01 X 02 Group 2:R 01 02 Group 3:R 01 02  Group 1 and Group 2 comprised of divorced parents. Group 3 made-up of intact parents.	Subjects had a child who attended one of three high schools in a rural Midwest area. N=98, 45 male, 53 female. All subjects from low to middle SES	No significant differences (.10 significance level) between the groups on the initial measure. On second measure children from the group of parents receiving the information reported fewer episode of being caught in the middle of their parent's arguments when compared to the two control groups.	Viable research design providing data to support the use of brief educational material to decrease frequency of child placed into parental conflict.  Future research should try to replicate similar design with full divorce-parenting course.
DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT			
ANOVA – between groups	32- item questionnaire piloted in prior research. Measures frequency of placing child into parental conflict.			

\*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable)  
R = Random Assignment of Subjects  
0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Kramer & Washo (1993)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) Does participation in a popular divorce parenting class decrease parental conflict or child exposure to that conflict?  (H) Class attendance will impact parental conflict and child exposure.	Subjects (one treatment group and one comparison) completed multiple measures prior to the class, just after the class and 3 months after. *Group 1: 01 X 02 03 Group 1: 01 02 03	Treatment group subjects (N= 168) attended a divorce-parenting course in Illinois. (98 females, 89% Caucasian, 6% African-American, mean age of 33.3 years, mean education = 14.16 years)  Comparison group subjects were recruited from a demographically similar nearby county where no class was provided. (31 females)	Despite reporting the program helpful, treatment group parents showed little change in their actual behaviors and attitudes regarding their children's adjustment when compared to the comparison group. Parents experiencing a high level of conflict with their former spouses did demonstrate improvements in decreasing the frequency of placing children into the parental conflict.	Results reflect the difficulty of attempted to change longstanding behaviors and attitudes with a brief intervention. Results also indicate that divorce-parenting interventions may have some impact on decreasing the level of child triangulation into the parental conflict.  The design to include multiple measures at three intervals aids in its viability as accepted empirical research.
DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT			
ANOVA – repeated measures to obtain between group effects.	Six subscale written instrument previously tested by researchers.			
<p>*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable) R = Random Assignment of Subjects</p> <p>0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)</p>				

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Kramer, Arbutnot, Gordon, Rousis & Hoza (1998)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) What are the effects of two different divorce-parenting course formats (one skills-based and one information-based) on domestic violence, child exposure to conflict, level of parental conflict, and child behavior problems?  (H) Parents who attend a skills-based course will have fewer conflict related problems than those who attend an information-based course.	Quasi-experimental design with 3 groups, 1 comparison and 2 treatment. Treatment subjects were randomly assigned to either group 1 or 2.  *Group 1: R 01 X1 02 Group 2: R 01 X2 02 Group 3: 01 02	Group 1 (N= 329) and group Group 2 (N=278) attended a divorce parenting course in Jacksonville, FL. Comparison group recruited from parents filing for divorce in a demographically similar county in Alabama.	Minimal differences seen between the two groups on dependent variables. Effects of skills-based programs were found to be significant (.01) in improving parental communication when compared to the information-based program.	Multi-faceted quasi-experimental design with large sample sizes and multiple measures reflect appropriate attention to the complexity of divorce phenomena. The most credible study completed to date.  Design only limited by inability to randomly assign all subjects.
DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT			
ANOVA- to compare two between and one within groups variable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict Tactics Scale</li> <li>Child Behavior Checklist</li> </ul>			

\*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable) 0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)

R = Random Assignment of Subjects

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Buehler, Betz, Ryan, Legg and Trotter (1992)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) What impact does a multi-session voluntary divorce-parenting course have on parental competition, child-rearing conflict or cooperation? (H) Parents who attend the program will have lower levels of competition and conflict, and higher cooperation.	Experimental design assigning parents to a treatment group or a control group. Measures done before, during, and four months after program.  *Group 1:01 X 02 03 Group 2:01 02 03	Treatment group subjects (N=143) participated in the divorce-parenting program. Control group subjects (N=98) recruited through same clinic. All subjects were divorcing parents in Tennessee. Age -32.5mean Education - 11.3 mean Income - \$1,150 monthly mean (1987)	Subjects who participated in treatment group reported high levels of satisfaction with program No significant (.01) differences between treatment and control group on all measures at all three intervals.	Closer examination of design found that subjects in treatment group were more likely to have contested divorces which led them to volunteer to take program. Design flaw limits the transferability of findings to other populations.

DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT	COMMENTS (continued)
MANOVA - Between groups with two levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court records</li> <li>• Ahrons Parental Involvement Scale</li> <li>• Child and Adolescent Adjustment Scale</li> <li>• Multi-scale instrument to measure parental cooperation and conflict.</li> </ul>	<p>Future studies should be aware of potential problems in using voluntary subjects.</p> <p>Study highlights need to examine the brief length of most divorce-parenting courses.</p>

\*Note: X = Treatment (Independent Variable)      0 = Observation/Measurement (Dependent Variable)  
R = Random Assignment of Subjects

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Bussey (1996)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
(Q) What is the message received by parents who attend a mandated divorce parenting intervention and what are the common elements of how parents react to these classes?  (H) None specified	Ethnographic investigation of a popular divorce-parenting course, Children Cope With Divorce. Parents were interviewed three years after they had been mandated to attend the program.	Sample = six divorcing parents who had attended the course in 1992. No other sample information provided.	Parents believed the program had helped them to understand the impact that their divorce had on their children's emotions and their need to exclude children from exposure to or involvement in parental conflict.	The qualitative in-depth approach provides helpful perceptions of how parents felt about the program. However, this information is generally know from the "consumer surveys" that many programs give parents at course completion. Study could have been improved by noting how parents specifically believed the course impacted their own behaviors or outcomes for their children.
<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>	<b>MEASUREMENT</b>			
None completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured phone interview</li> </ul>			

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of Selected Studies of Divorce-Parenting Education Programs

STUDY: Fischer (1997)

QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS	DESIGN	SAMPLING	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
<p>(Q) What impact do judges believe that the Children Coping With Divorce Program have on parents who attend the course?</p> <p>(H) Judges will report the program as helping divorcing families.</p>	<p>Nationwide survey of judges who require divorcing parents to attend the Children Coping With Divorce Program.</p>	<p>625 family law judges from 38 US states were mailed the survey. 246 judges completed the instrument. Of the completing judges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 80% were male</li> <li>- 20% female</li> <li>- Average number of years as a judge = 10.5</li> <li>- From 24 states</li> </ul>	<p>Over 95% of judges assessed the program as valuable in lessening the negative effects of divorce on children and benefiting families. 80% of the judges believed the program reduced parental relitigation and increased parent's ability to agree on custody arrangements.</p>	<p>Study represents a key element in understanding family court judges' positive perceptions of divorce parenting courses. Research highlights the political and legal impetus precipitating the emergence of these programs. Judges were not requested to provide supporting data of their perceptions, nor was there evidence of actual outcomes for divorcing parents.</p>
DATA ANALYSIS	MEASUREMENT			
<p>Two-tailed test only</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief written survey with six fixed answer response questions and four open-ended questions.</li> </ul>			

**Appendix B:**  
**Recommended Minimum Curriculum Standards**  
**for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in**  
**the State of Florida**

## **Appendix B: Recommended Minimum Curriculum Standards for Parenting Courses for Divorcing Parents in the State of Florida**

The following recommended MINIMUM curriculum standards for parenting courses for divorcing parents in the state of Florida have been developed pursuant to the legislative mandate contained Specific Appropriation 2136 of the 1997 General Appropriations Act. The specific content items contained in each component are recommended for inclusion in every parenting course for divorcing parents offered in the state of Florida. However, the inclusion of items under headings, the order of presentation of the items, and the suggested times in this document are not intended to prescribe the organization of actual parenting courses. In addition, the method or technique for conveying the specific content is not prescribed. Effective techniques may include lecture, group discussion, role-plays, videotapes, or other instructional methods.

### **I. DIVORCE AS LOSS (approximately 20 minutes)**

This component should include recognition of divorce as the loss of the current family structure and processes experienced by adults and children in working through loss. In addition, a distinction should be made between loss of the current family structure and the continuing parental role.

- a. Divorce as a loss: The participant will recognize that the divorce may be viewed as a loss for every family member.
- b. Stages of grief in adults: The participant will identify how adults process losses in their lives.
- c. Stages of grief in children: The participant will recognize how the processing of loss may be different for children than adults.
- d. Loss of the marriage but not of the parental role: The participant will differentiate between loss of the marital relationship and the on-going parental role.

### **II. PERMANENCY OF PARENTAL ROLE / SHARED PARENTING (Approximately 10 minutes)**

This component should include information about how children are positively impacted by a continuing relationship with both parents and the types of support children need from both parents.

- a. Children's need to maintain a relationship with both parents: The participant will identify the benefits to children of maintaining a positive relationship with both parents after a divorce and the possible negative



consequences of the loss of a relationship with one parent as a result of a divorce.

- b. Parents' responsibility to continue providing support: The participant will understand the importance of each parent contributing to the emotional and economic well being of the children after the divorce.

### **III. DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES (approximately 40 minutes)**

This component should include information about how children in traditional families typically develop as they grow, as well as how a divorce may impact development, what parents can do to minimize the impact, and when to seek additional help for a child experiencing problems.

- a. Typical developmental stages of children: The participant will understand general information about child development from infancy to eighteen years old.
- b. Impact of divorce on children at each of the developmental stages: The participant will recognize common reactions to divorce of children at each developmental stage.
- c. What parents can do to lessen the impact of divorce: The participant will recognize parental behaviors that may reduce or eliminate the reactions of children to divorce.
- d. Indicators of more serious problems with children: The participant will be able to identify children's behaviors and attitudes that may indicate professional help is necessary to address the children's reaction to a divorce.
- e. Sources of help for serious problems with children: The participant will obtain a list of local, school, religious, community and professional resources which are available to assist parents with children who are having difficulty in adjusting to a divorce. The list may include resources itemized on page seven of this document, in section IX WHERE TO FIND ADDITIONAL HELP and the list should contain a non-endorsement statement that states the programs and resources are not monitored or endorsed by the circuit court.

### **IV. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILDREN (Approximately 30 minutes)**

This component should include information about discussing divorce-related issues with children and how to discuss these issues, including appropriate and inappropriate content and effective and ineffective methods.

- a. Talking with your children about the divorce: The participant will identify the general issues about both the content and method of discussing divorce with children. The participant will understand that discussing divorce with children should include age appropriate information about residential and visitation issues, the expected economic impact on the children, reassurances of the love each parent has for the children, and an opportunity for the children to ask questions.
- b. Encouraging children to express their emotions: The participant will recognize the importance of allowing children to express their concerns and feelings about divorce and will learn methods of handling emotional content.
- c. Keeping the lines of communication open: The participant will identify methods that facilitate on-going communication between parents and children and understand the importance of parental attitudes to open and effective communication.

**V. COMMUNICATING WITH THE OTHER PARENT** (approximately 30 minutes)

This component should include the negative impact of a parent expressing anger toward the other parent in front of the children, the benefits to children of keeping them out of the middle of parental conflict, and how to establish a relationship with the other parent which will minimize the children's exposure to parental conflict.

- a. Acknowledging the possibility of existing anger between parents: The participant will recognize that there may be unresolved anger between the parents and will be motivated to work through their issues outside the children's presence for the benefit of their children.
- b. Benefits of not placing the child in the middle of parental conflict: The participant will recognize how children benefit from parental communication, which does not make them the messenger and will recognize the negative impact of parental conflict concerning the children's needs.
- c. Avoiding child exposure to any parental conflict: The participant will acknowledge the impact on children of seeing or hearing parental conflict,
- d. Optimal parental relationship after divorce: The participant will identify the benefits to the children of both parents establishing a goal of being friends, or, at a minimum, maintaining a business-like relationship between parents

## **VI. ABUSE (approximately 10 minutes)**

This component should include a brief discussion of the local community resources available for victims and perpetrators of spouse abuse and a brief discussion of what types of child abuse should be reported to the Child Abuse Hotline and the penalties for false abuse reports.

- a. Spouse abuse: The participant will recognize behaviors that are abusive, the civil and criminal remedies available, and the local community resources available to assist both perpetrators and victims.
- b. Child abuse: The participant will identify types of child abuse appropriate for reporting to the Child Abuse Hotline, will obtain the telephone number (1 - 800-96ABUSE) and will understand the penalties for filing false child abuse reports.

## **VII. LEGAL CONCEPTS (approximately 25 minutes)**

This component should include general information about Florida family law, including references to statutory definitions. Parenting course instructors should be careful to avoid giving legal advice by emphasizing general legal concepts and deterring specific factual questions to a licensed attorney. Reading out loud the following statement (or one containing similar content) is recommended:

This component of the parenting course will discuss general Florida family law principles. The presentation of this material is not intended to constitute legal advice. Your instructor is not able to answer specific legal questions in this forum and you are encouraged to discuss specific questions about your individual case with a licensed attorney of your choice.

- a. Best interest of the child: The participant will understand the statutory factors that courts consider in ruling on shared parental responsibility and primary residence [§61.13(3), Florida Statutes (1997)].
- b. Shared parental responsibility: The participant will be able to explain the rights and responsibilities of shared parenting [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- c. Sole parental responsibility: The participant will be able to identify the standard for awarding sole parental responsibility and will recognize that an award of sole parental responsibility does not preclude the court from entering an order for child support or visitation [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- d. Primary residential parent (contrasted with custody): The participant will be able to distinguish between primary physical residence and

- custody and will recognize that, after considering all relevant facts, both parents shall be given the same consideration in determining who is the primary residential parent [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
- e. Secondary residential parent: The participant will be able to explain the rights and responsibilities of secondary residential parents [§61.13, Florida Statutes (1997)].
  - f. Child support: The participant will be able to locate the statutory child support guidelines, will understand the methods for paying child support, and will understand the possible consequences for failure to pay child support [§§61.1301 - 61.13017, 61.14, 61.17 - 61.182, 61.30, Florida Statutes (1997)].
  - g. Visitation: The participant will recognize the rights of the secondary residential parent to visitation, will recognize the remedies available for failing to honor visitation rights, and will understand that child support and visitation are unrelated [§61.13(4), Florida Statutes (1997)].
  - h. Mediation: The participant will understand the advantages of mediation and that nearly all contested family law cases are referred to mediation prior to trial [§61.183, Florida Statutes (1997)].
  - i. The role of a guardian ad litem: The participant will understand the role and responsibilities of guardians' ad litem appointed in family law cases [§§61.401 - 61.405, Florida Statutes (1997)].
  - j. Final Judgment: The participant will understand the types of issues decided and the effect of a final judgment in dissolution of marriage.
  - k. Modification: The participant will recognize the procedures for filing for a modification of a final judgment and will understand the standard for modification is an extraordinary and substantial change in circumstances.

#### VIII. VISITATION (approximately 20 minutes)

This component should include information about the benefits to children of maintaining a stable and consistent relationship with both parents, suggestions about how to develop a parenting plan, and effective communication between parents about visitation.

- a. Quality time spent with both parents is essential: The participant will understand the benefits to children of spending quality time with both parents, including techniques for effective single parenting.
- b. Formulating a parenting plan: The participant will recognize what content may be included in a parenting plan, and emphasizes the importance of keeping parenting plans and visitation schedules simple, routine, and age-appropriate.
- c. Cooperative attitude between parents: The participant will recognize the importance of non-conflictual communication between the parents, including keeping children out of the middle of disagreements concerning visitation.

**IX. WHERE TO FIND ADDITIONAL HELP (approximately 10 minutes)**

This component should provide a local list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of persons and agencies who may provide assistance to divorced parents of children, and the list should contain a non-endorsement statement that states the programs and resources are not monitored or endorsed by the circuit court.

- a. Sources of referrals
  - 1. Family doctor or Pediatrician
  - 2. School guidance counselors
  - 3. Clergy
  - 4. Family members
  - 5. Friends

## **Appendix C: Instructor Training Sessions**

## **Appendix C: Instructor Training Sessions**

### **Cognitive Course Training Session**

1. Discuss dates of Cognitive course
  - a. Need for researcher to be notified if “back-up” instructor is required
  - b. Training of “back-up” instructor
  - c. Schedule requirements
2. Brief Review of Cognitive Concepts Employed in Course:
  - a. The mediation model
  - b. Importance of perception
  - c. The concept of constructivism
  - d. Cognitive restructuring
  - e. “Knowledge is power”
3. Necessary Parameters for the Study:
  - a. Florida Minimum Curriculum Standards for Divorce Parenting Programs
  - b. Content and overall parity between the classes
  - c. Course time requirements
  - d. Need to keep courses separate until the duration of the project
4. Review and Discussion of Cognitive Manual
  - a. Review each section of manual
  - b. Review instructor comments and feedback
  - c. Discuss feasibility of any proposed changes
  - d. Finalize all changes

## **Cognitive-Behavioral Course Training Session**

1. Discuss dates of Cognitive-Behavioral course
  - a. Need for researcher to be notified if "back-up" instructor is required
  - b. Training of "back-up" instructor
  - c. Schedule requirements
2. Brief Review of Cognitive-Behavioral Concepts Employed in Course:
  - a. Social Learning Theory
  - b. Specific communication and interaction skills needed by divorcing parents
  - c. Specific cognitive-behavioral techniques:
    - Chaining
    - Model presentation
    - Behavior rehearsal
3. Necessary Parameters for the Study:
  - a. Florida Minimum Curriculum Standards for Divorce Parenting Programs
  - b. Content and overall parity between the classes
  - c. Course time requirements
  - d. Need to keep courses separate for the duration of the project
4. Review and Discussion of Cognitive-Behavioral Manual
  - a. Review each section of manual
  - b. Discuss Skills-Based video
  - c. Review instructor comments and feedback
  - d. Discuss feasibility of any proposed changes
  - e. Finalize all changes



**Appendix D:**  
**Consent Form and Divorce Parenting Project Survey**  
**# 1**

Appendix D: Consent Form and Divorce Parenting Project Survey # 1

Dear Parent,

I am a Doctoral Candidate under the direction of Professor Neil Abell in the School of Social Work at Florida State University. I am conducting a research study of the class you are about to take. Your completion of this survey and the two others that will follow later will greatly help in the development of these classes as a way to assist divorcing families.

Your participation will involve completing the attached survey, which takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. It will also involve taking a second brief survey (about 5 to 10 minutes to complete) after the course today, and completing a third survey by mail like the first one three months from today. When you complete all three surveys a \$25 check will be mailed to you at the address you have given me on the information card. All information collected from you in this study will remain confidential and none of your responses will be shared with your children's other parent, nor with any attorney to the extent allowed by law. All records containing any names will be destroyed immediately upon completion of data collection. Remaining data will be retained by the researcher in an anonymous form for a period no greater than five years. Your participation is entirely voluntary and no one will be informed of your decision to participate or not participate. If you decide to participate, you may discontinue your participation at any time with no consequences. No services will be withheld from you if you choose not to participate. Your name will not be used in any research results that may be published from this study.

Some of the questions in the survey may provoke some anxiety regarding your current family situation. If you become concerned about your safety a referral will be made to one of the resources listed in the course manual you will receive in the class.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your help!

James D. Whitworth  
Divorce Parenting Project  
201 Cascade St.,  
Panama City, FL  
(850) 872-1922

I give my consent to participate in the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date) \_\_\_\_\_ (signature) \_\_\_\_\_

## Survey #1

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant # \_\_\_\_\_

### **DIVORCE PARENTING PROJECT SURVEY # 1**

This survey is part of a study about how best to help divorcing families. Your completion of the survey will greatly help in the development of classes like the one you are about to take.

This survey contains questions about your relationship with your children and your children's other parent. You may have children from a previous marriage. Please answer all questions as they relate to the marriage you are currently ending. The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions or concerns.  
Thank you for your help!

James D. Whitworth  
Divorce Parenting Project  
Florida State University  
School of Social Work  
201 Cascade St.,  
Panama City, FL  
(850) 872-1922

### **A. General Information**

1. What is today's date? Month\_\_\_\_\_, Day\_\_\_\_\_ Year,\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your gender? Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your ethnicity?:  

<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American
<input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic
<input type="checkbox"/> Asia/Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____
4. Are you currently or have you previously participated in any divorce mediation services regarding the marriage you are now ending? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you been married to the person you are now divorcing? \_\_\_\_\_

### **B. Conflicts of Interest**

Please Check (✓) how often DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS you and your children's other parent have DISAGREED ABOUT:

6. Where the children should live most of the time?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
7. Who should make decisions about child education, health, and general well-being?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
8. Who should have custody?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
9. The number of visits?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
10. The timing of visits?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
11. Other visiting questions such as vacation, transportation, or holidays?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

### **C. Children's Issues**

Please Check (✓) how often these issues were true DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

12. How often have your children heard or seen conflict between you and their other parent?  

<input type="checkbox"/> Daily	<input type="checkbox"/> Once or Twice per week	<input type="checkbox"/> Once or Twice per month	<input type="checkbox"/> Once or Twice for the past 3 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--------------------------------	--	---	---	--------------------------------

13. How often have your children said they didn't want to see or be with their other parent?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
14. How often you encouraged your children to spend time with their other parent?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
15. How often you told your children that their other parent loves them?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
16. If you felt angry, depressed, or upset because of the children's other parent, how often talked to your children about it?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
17. How often have you asked your children to take messages to their other parent when you didn't want to talk to them?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
18. How often have you asked your children about the other parent's activities or relationships with others?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
19. How often have you asked your children to resolve problems with their other parent regarding money or child support?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never
20. How often have you criticized or "put-down" the other parent in front of your children?  
☐ Daily   ☐ Once or Twice per week   ☐ Once or Twice per month   ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months   ☐ Never

#### **D. Relationship History**

Please circle how often these statements were true DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

21. How many times have you and your children's other parent had a bad argument (e.g. great anger, shouting, name calling, etc.) about your children?

During the past three months:   0   1-2   3-4   5-6   7 or more times

22. How many times have you and the children's other parent had a bad argument about other issues?

During the past three months:    0    1-2    3-4    5-6    7 or more times

23. How many times has the children's other parent tried to frighten or intimidate you (e.g. making threats, following you, or harassing you on the phone)?

During the past three months:    0    1-2    3-4    5-6    7 or more times

24. How many times has the children's other parent physically hurt you (e.g. shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, choking, etc.) even if it didn't leave marks or you didn't report it?

During the past three months:    0    1-2    3-4    5-6    7 or more times

25. How many times has the children's other parent used a weapon (e.g. gun, knife, car, etc.) to threaten or injure you?

During the past three months:    0    1-2    3-4    5-6    7 or more times

26. Do you have a permanent injunction against someone?    \_\_\_\_ yes    \_\_\_\_ no

27. Does someone have a permanent injunction against you?    \_\_\_\_ yes    \_\_\_\_ no

**E. Participant Knowledge**

**Please circle the number that best shows your agreement with each of the following statements, where:**

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28. In the past, I have recognized that anger is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. In the past, I have recognized that denial is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. In the past, I have recognized that bargaining is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. In the past, I have recognized that depression is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. In the past, I have recognized that acceptance is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33. In the past, I have recognized that my child(ren) may have feelings of grief after the divorce                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. In the past, I have noticed that my child(ren) dealt with the divorce in a different way than I or my spouse.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. In the past, I have told my child(ren) that I will remain involved in his/her/their lives as his/her/their parent.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. In the past, I have provided emotional support to my child(ren).  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. In the past, I have encouraged my child(ren) to maintain a positive relationship with his/her/their other parent.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. In the past, I have encouraged my child(ren) to talk on a regular basis with his/her/their other parent.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. In the past, I have considered my child(ren)'s age when trying to determine how he/she/they is/are dealing with the divorce.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. In the past, I have considered my child(ren)'s behaviors as a way to understand how he/she/they is/are feeling about the divorce. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. In the past, I have considered my child(ren)'s age when trying to understand how he/she/they is/are dealing with the divorce.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. In the past, I have told my child(ren) about the divorce.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. In the past, I have encouraged my child(ren) to talk about the divorce.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. In the past, I have used the services of a local domestic violence shelter.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. In the past, I have telephoned the Florida Child Abuse Hotline with an abuse report.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. In the past, I have put together a parenting plan with my spouse.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 47. In the past, I have taken steps to set-up a routine visitation schedule for my child(ren). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. In the past, I have used community resources to help my child(ren) handle the divorce.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. In the past, I have used community resources for divorce related issue.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

48. In the past, I have used community resources to help my child(ren) handle the divorce. 1 2 3 4 5

49. In the past, I have used community resources for divorce related issue. 1 2 3 4 5

## **F. Parental Communication**

Please Check (✓) how often these statement were true DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

50. When you and your children's other parent discuss parenting issues, how often does an argument result?

     Always      Frequently      Sometimes      Rarely      Never

51. How often is the underlying atmosphere one of hostility and anger?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never

52. How often is the conversation stressful and tense?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never

53. Do you and your children's other parent have basic differences of opinion about issues related to child rearing?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never

54. When you need help regarding the children, do you seek it from the children's other parent?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never

55. Would you say that your children's other parent is a resource to you in raising the children?

     Always      Frequently      Sometimes      Rarely      Never

56. Would you say that you are a resource to your children's other parent?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never

57. If your children's other parent has needed to make a change in visitation arrangements, do you go out of your way to accommodate them?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never

58. Does your children's other parent go out of the way to accommodate any changes you need to make?

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never



59. Do you feel that your children's other parent understands and is supportive of your special needs as a parent (custodial or noncustodial)?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

### **G. Children's Behaviors**

If you have more than one child, please consider the child who has the greatest behavioral problems when answering questions in this section. Please Check (✓) how often your child has done one of the following DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

60. Feel happy or relaxed?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
61. Hide his/her thoughts from other people?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
62. Say or do really strange things?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
63. Not pay attention when he/she should?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
64. Quit a job or a task without finishing it?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
65. Get along well with other people?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
66. Hit, push or hurt someone?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
67. Get along poorly with other people?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
68. Get very upset?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
69. Compliment or help someone?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time
70. Feel sick?  
☐ Rarely or Never ☐ A little of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ A good part of the time ☐ Most or all of the time

71. Cheat?

\_\_\_ Rarely or  
Never

\_\_\_ A little of  
the time

\_\_\_ Some of  
the time

\_\_\_ A good part  
of the time

\_\_\_ Most or all  
of the time

72. Lose his/her temper?

\_\_\_ Rarely or  
Never

\_\_\_ A little of  
the time

\_\_\_ Some of  
the time

\_\_\_ A good part  
of the time

\_\_\_ Most or all  
of the time

**Appendix E:**  
**Divorce Parenting Project Survey # 2 (Posttest)**

Appendix E: Divorce Parenting Project Survey # 2 (Posttest)

**Divorce Parenting Project Survey # 2**

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant # \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle the number that best shows your agreement with each of the following statements, where:**

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In the future, I will recognize that anger is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. In the future, I will recognized that denial is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. In the future, I will recognize that bargaining is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. In the future, I will recognize that depression is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. In the future, I will recognize that acceptance is part of my grieving over the loss of the marriage.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. In the future, I will recognize that my child(ren) may have feelings of grief after the divorce.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. In the future, I will notice that my child(ren) dealt with the divorce in a different way than I or my spouse.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. In the future, I will tell my child(ren) that I will remain involved in his/her/their lives as his/her/their parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. In the future, I will provide emotional support to my child(ren).  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. In the future, I will provide economic support to my child(ren).  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. In the future, I will encouraged my child(ren) to maintain a positive relationship with his/her/their other parent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. In the future, I will encourage my child(ren) to talk on a regular basis with his/her/their other parent.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Please circle the number that best shows your agreement with each of the following statements, where:**

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. In the future, I will consider my child(ren)'s age when trying to determine how he/she/they is/are dealing with the divorce.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. In the future, I will consider my child(ren)'s behaviors as a way to understand how he/she/they is/are feeling about the divorce. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. In the future, I will consider my child(ren)'s age when trying to understand how he/she/they is/are dealing with the divorce.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. In the future, I will tell my child(ren) about the divorce.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. In the future, I will encourage my child(ren) to talk about the divorce.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. In the future, I will use the services of a local domestic violence shelter if the need arises.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. In the future, I will telephone the Florida Child Abuse Hotline with an abuse report if the need arises.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. In the future, I intend to put together a parenting plan with my spouse.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. In the future, I will take steps to set up a routine visitation schedule for my child(ren).                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. In the future, I intend to use community resources to help my child(ren) handle the divorce.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. In the future, I will use community resources for divorce related issues if the need arises.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Appendix F:**  
**Divorce Parenting Project Survey # 3 (Follow-up  
Posttest)**

Appendix F: Divorce Parenting Project Survey # 3 (Follow-up Posttest)

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant # \_\_\_\_\_

**DIVORCE PARENTING PROJECT SURVEY # 3**

This survey is part of a study about how best to help divorcing families. Your completion of the survey will greatly help in the development of classes like the one you have recently taken.

This survey contains questions about you relationship with your children and your child(ren)'s other parent. You may have children from a previous marriage, please answer all questions as they relate to the marriage you are currently ending. The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

All information collected from you in this study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law. None of your responses will be shared with your children's other parent, nor with any attorney, nor with the courts. Your participation is entirely voluntary and no one will be informed of your decision to participate or not participate. If you decide to participate, you may discontinue your participation at any time. No services will be withheld from you if you choose not to participate.

***Once you have completed this survey please return it in the enclosed postage paid envelope. Please make sure that the address that I have for you is correct. When your completed survey is received a \$25 check will be mailed to you.***

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions or concerns.  
Thank you for your help!

James D. Whitworth  
Divorce Parenting Project  
Florida State University  
School of Social Work  
201 Cascade St.,  
Panama City, FL  
(850) 872-1922

### **A. General Information**

1. What is today's date? Month \_\_\_\_\_, Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year, \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your gender? Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your ethnicity?:  
\_\_\_\_ American Indian                      \_\_\_\_ Black/African American  
\_\_\_\_ White/Caucasian                      \_\_\_\_ Hispanic  
\_\_\_\_ Asia/Pacific Islander                      \_\_\_\_ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you currently or have you previously participated in any divorce mediation services regarding the marriage you are now ending? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you been married to the person you are now divorcing? \_\_\_\_\_

### **B. Conflicts of Interest**

Please Check (✓) how often DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS you and your children's other parent have DISAGREED ABOUT:

6. Where the children should live most of the time?  
\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Never
7. Who should make decisions about child education, health, and general well-being?  
\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Never
8. Who should have custody?  
\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Never
9. The number of visits?  
\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Never
10. The timing of visits?  
\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Never
11. Other visiting questions such as vacation, transportation, or holidays?  
\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_ Never

### **C. Children's Issues**

Please Check (✓) how often these issues were true DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

12. How often have your children heard or seen conflict between you and their other parent?  
\_\_\_\_ Daily    \_\_\_\_ Once or Twice    \_\_\_\_ Once or Twice    \_\_\_\_ Once or Twice for    \_\_\_\_ Never  
                    per week                      per month                      the past 3 months



13. How often have your children said they didn't want to see or be with their other parent?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
14. How often you encouraged your children to spend time with their other parent?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
15. How often you told your children that their other parent loves them?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
16. If you felt angry, depressed, or upset because of the children's other parent, how often talked to your children about it?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
17. How often have you asked your children to take messages to their other parent when you didn't want to talk to them?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
18. How often have you asked your children about the other parent's activities or relationships with others?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
19. How often have you asked your children to resolve problems with their other parent regarding money or child support?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never
20. How often have you criticized or "put-down" the other parent in front of your children?  
☐ Daily    ☐ Once or Twice per week    ☐ Once or Twice per month    ☐ Once or Twice for the past 3 months    ☐ Never

#### **D. Relationship History**

Please circle how often these statements were true DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

21. How many times have you and your children's other parent had a bad argument (e.g. great anger, shouting, name calling, etc.) about your children?

During the past three months:    0    1-2    3-4    5-6    7 or more times

22. How many times have you and the children's other parent had a bad argument about other issues?

During the past three months:      0      1-2      3-4      5-6      7 or more times

23. How many times has the children's other parent tried to frighten or intimidate you (e.g. making threats, following you, or harassing you on the phone)?

During the past three months:      0      1-2      3-4      5-6      7 or more times

24. How many times has the children's other parent physically hurt you (e.g. shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, choking, etc.) even if it didn't leave marks or you didn't report it?

During the past three months:      0      1-2      3-4      5-6      7 or more times

25. How many times has the children's other parent used a weapon (e.g. gun, knife, car, etc.) to threaten or injure you?

During the past three months:      0      1-2      3-4      5-6      7 or more times

26. Do you have a permanent injunction against someone? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

27. Does someone have a permanent injunction against you? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

### E. Participant Knowledge

**Please circle the number that best shows your agreement with each of the following statements, where:**

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

28. In the future, I will recognize that anger is part of my grieving  
over the loss of the marriage.

29. In the future, I will recognize that denial is part of my grieving  
over the loss of the marriage.

30. In the future, I will recognize that bargaining is part of my  
grieving over the loss of the marriage.

31. In the future, I will recognize that depression is part of my  
grieving over the loss of the marriage.

32. In the future, I will recognize that acceptance is part of my  
grieving over the loss of the marriage.

**1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33. In the future, I will recognize that my child(ren) may have feelings of grief after the divorce                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. In the future, I will notice that my child(ren) dealt with the divorce in a different way than I or my spouse.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. In the future, I will tell my child(ren) that I will remain involved in his/her/their lives as his/her/their parent.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. In the future, I will provide emotional support to my child(ren).   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. In the future, I will encourage my child(ren) to maintain a positive relationship with his/her/their other parent.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. In the future, I will encourage my child(ren) to talk on a regular basis with his/her/their other parent.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. In the future, I will consider my child(ren)'s age when trying to determine how he/she/they is/are dealing with the divorce.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. In the future, I will consider my child(ren)'s behaviors as a way to understand how he/she/they is/are feeling about the divorce. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. In the future, I will consider my child(ren)'s age when trying to understand how he/she/they is/are dealing with the divorce.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. In the future, I will tell my child(ren) about the divorce.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. In the future, I will encourage my child(ren) to talk about the divorce.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. In the future, I will use the services of a local domestic violence shelter if the need arises.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. In the future, I will telephone the Florida Child Abuse Hotline with an abuse report if the need arises.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=undecided    4=agree    5=strongly agree

46. In the future, I intend to put together a parenting plan with my spouse.    1    2    3    4    5
47. In the future, I will take steps to set-up a routine visitation schedule for my child(ren).    1    2    3    4    5
48. In the future, I intend to use community resources to help my child(ren) handle the divorce.    1    2    3    4    5
49. In the future, I will use community resources for divorce related issue. if the need arises.    1    2    3    4    5

### **F. Parental Communication**

Please Check (✓) how often these statement were true DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

50. When you and your children's other parent discuss parenting issues, how often does an argument result?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never
51. How often is the underlying atmosphere one of hostility and anger?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never
52. How often is the conversation stressful and tense?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never
53. Do you and your children's other parent have basic differences of opinion about issues related to child rearing?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never
54. When you need help regarding the children, do you seek it from the children's other parent?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never
55. Would you say that your children's other parent is a resource to you in raising the children?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never
56. Would you say that you are a resource to your children's other parent?  
       \_\_\_ Always    \_\_\_ Frequently    \_\_\_ Sometimes    \_\_\_ Rarely    \_\_\_ Never

57. If your children's other parent has needed to make a change in visitation arrangements, do you go out of your way to accommodate them?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
58. Does your children's other parent go out of the way to accommodate any changes you need to make?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
59. Do you feel that your children's other parent understands and is supportive of your special needs as a parent (custodial or noncustodial)?  
☐ Always ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

### **G. Children's Behaviors**

If you have more than one child, please consider the child who has the greatest behavioral problems when answering questions in this section. Please Check (✓) how often your child has done one of the following DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

60. Feel happy or relaxed?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
61. Hide his/her thoughts from other people?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
62. Say or do really strange things?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
63. Not pay attention when he/she should?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
64. Quit a job or a task without finishing it?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
65. Get along well with other people?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
66. Hit, push or hurt someone?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time
67. Get along poorly with other people?  
☐ Rarely or ☐ A little of ☐ Some of ☐ A good part ☐ Most or all  
☐ Never ☐ the time ☐ the time ☐ of the time ☐ of the time

68. Get very upset?

\_\_\_ Rarely or \_\_\_ A little of \_\_\_ Some of \_\_\_ A good part \_\_\_ Most or all  
Never the time the time of the time of the time

69. Compliment or help someone?

\_\_\_ Rarely or \_\_\_ A little of \_\_\_ Some of \_\_\_ A good part \_\_\_ Most or all  
Never the time the time of the time of the time

70. Feel sick?

\_\_\_ Rarely or \_\_\_ A little of \_\_\_ Some of \_\_\_ A good part \_\_\_ Most or all  
Never the time the time of the time of the time

71. Cheat?

\_\_\_ Rarely or \_\_\_ A little of \_\_\_ Some of \_\_\_ A good part \_\_\_ Most or all  
Never the time the time of the time of the time

72. Lose his/her temper?

\_\_\_ Rarely or \_\_\_ A little of \_\_\_ Some of \_\_\_ A good part \_\_\_ Most or all  
Never the time the time of the time of the time

**Appendix G:**  
**Instructor Observation Checklist**

# INSTRUCTOR OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Respond to each statement using the following scale:

1=Needs Improvement      2=Satisfactory      3=Well Done

## Organization

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Presented overview of the lesson.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Paced lesson appropriately.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Presented topics in logical sequence.             | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Related today's lesson to previous/future lesson. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Summarized major points of the lesson.            | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## Presentation

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 6. Explained things with clarity.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Defined unfamiliar terms, concepts, and principles.     | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Used good examples to clarify points.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. Showed all the steps in solutions to homework problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. Varied explanations for complex or difficult material. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. Emphasized important points.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## Interaction

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 12. Actively encouraged student questions.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. Asked questions to monitor student understanding.        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. Waited sufficient time for students to answer questions. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. Listened carefully to students' questions.               | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16. Responded appropriately to student questions.            | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17. Restated questions and answers when necessary.           | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## Verbal and Non Verbal Communication

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 18. Voice is audible.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19. Voice is modulated for variety and emphasis.           | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. Speech fillers (OK, AH, um) are not used excessively.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21. The pace of delivery is neither too fast nor too slow. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22. Voice projects enthusiasm.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 23. Establishes eye contact throughout the class.          | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24. Moves about classroom, but is not distracting.         | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25. Listens carefully to student comments and questions.   | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Note: Body language does not reflect impatience with student responses.

(continued other side)



Summary Comments

26. What were the instructor's major strengths as demonstrated in this observation?

27. What suggestions do you have for improving the instructor's skills or methodology?

## **Appendix H: Instructor Bias Identification Questions**

**Please answer the following questions that will help me understand your beliefs and opinions regarding marriage, divorce, and related issues. I realize that the subject matter of some of the questions is rather sensitive. However, understanding your perspectives on these issues will help me to better analyze the research that we are conducting. Please feel free to contact me at 872-1922.**

1. Have you ever been divorced? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no.
2. If divorced, did you have children resulting from your marriage? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ n/a
3. Which of the following statements is most consistent with your views of divorce (Check One):  
  
\_\_\_\_ a. Divorce should be available to couples experiencing irreconcilable differences.  
  
\_\_\_\_ b. Divorce should only be available to couples experiencing desertion, domestic violence, substance abuse, or any other serious problem.  
  
\_\_\_\_ c. Divorce should be available only under extremely limited circumstances.  
  
\_\_\_\_ d. Other view (Please describe): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have strongly held religious beliefs? Please explain any relation these may or may not have with your views toward divorce.

**Appendix I:**  
**Human Subjects and Facility Approvals**



Office of the Vice President  
for Research  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2811  
(850) 644-5260 • FAX (850) 644-4392

## APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

from the Human Subjects Committee

Date: September 15, 1999

From: David Quadagno, Chair *DQ/ph*

To: James D. Whitworth  
201 Cascade Street  
Panama City, FL 32405

Dept: Social Work

Re: Use of Human subjects in Research  
Project entitled: Divorce Parenting Project

---

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on July 8, 1999. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by September 15, 2000 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is M1339.

cc: N. Abell  
APPLICATION NO. 99.328



Office of the Vice President  
for Research  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2811  
(850) 644-5260 • FAX (850) 644-4392

**APPROVAL MEMORANDUM** (for change in research protocol)  
from the Human Subjects Committee

Date: January 31, 2000

From: David Quadagno, Chair *DQ/ph*

To: James D. Whitworth  
201 Cascade Street  
Panama City, FL 32405

Dept: Social Work

Re: Use of Human subjects in Research  
Project entitled: Divorce Parenting Project

---

The memorandum that you submitted to this office in regard to the requested change in your research protocol for the above-referenced project have been reviewed and approved. Thank you for informing the Committee of this change.

A reminder that if the project has not been completed by September 15, 2000, you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is M1339.

cc: N. Abell  
chgapp.doc  
APPLICATION NO. 99.328



**Life Management Center**

*Of Northwest Florida Inc.*

Jim Whitworth  
Doctoral Candidate  
Florida State University  
School of Social Work  
Divorce Parenting Project  
201 Cascade Street  
Panama City, FL 32405

10/8/99

Dear Mr. Whitworth:

I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research regarding parenting interventions for divorcing persons has been approved by Life Management Center. I am enclosing a draft copy of the applicable procedure from our policy manual which you will need to review. Please assure that your activities meet with these requirements and consider me your liaison during the course of your research.

I look forward to participating in your work and the benefits it will bring to our support of divorcing families.

Sincerely, .

Julie Kitzerow, LMFT  
Children's Services Director

POLICY AREA: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

SUBJECT: CONDUCT OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

PURPOSE: To contribute to the advancement of knowledge and skills that support the well-being of our clients.

POLICY: It is the policy of the Life Management Center of Northwest Florida, Inc., to contribute to the development of behavioral health science while safeguarding the welfare of persons served.

REFERENCE: 1999 CARF Behavioral Health Standards Manual,  
Section 4.A - 72

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Conditions of Participation

1. The focus of the proposed project must have direct relevance to the mission of the Center and presumed value to persons served by the Center.
2. Participation in research is contingent on approval by the Human Subject Research Committee of an accredited university.
3. Participation in research is limited to projects that:
  - are voluntary
  - do not involve minors or those with a diminished capacity to consent
  - do not involve intrusive techniques such as medications
  - do not involve aversive techniques



4. The Executive Director or Executive Committee of the Board of Directors must approve the project.

5. The Center's insurance broker must furnish a written statement indicating that the nature of the research is acceptable to the carrier and that participation in the project will not compromise the Center's exposure to liability.

6. If the project involves persons who are referred by another agency, the agreement of that organization will be obtained.

#### Procedure

7. The research applicant will submit a request to the Executive Director that explains the project's purpose, procedures, intended outcome, and value to persons served.

8. Any expected benefits to the Center (e.g., inclusion in publication, service recommendations, publicity) will be clearly established and communicated in writing.

9. Upon request from the Executive Director, the applicant will arrange for the submission of the Human Subject Research approval packet. This must be a copy of the original source documentation with a verifiable signature of the individual(s) authorized by the university to approve the research.

10. It is the prerogative of the Executive Director or Executive Committee of the Board to approve or reject any application.

11. Upon disposition of the application, the researcher is contacted by the Center designated authority regarding the outcome. No research associated activities may be undertaken until final approval by the Executive Director or Executive Committee.

12. Upon approval, the project packet is placed in an archival file kept in the office of the Executive Director. The packet includes but is not limited to:

- the applicant's request

- the agency's response

- documented approval of the research from the from the Human Subject Research Committee

- copies of instruments to be used with participants

- periodic written status reports from the researcher regarding the progress of the project.

13. An LMC staff member is designated as the liaison who will assume responsibility for coordination with the researcher.

14. Informed consent will be obtained from persons participating in the project

and kept on file with the project packet. Consent includes:

- full disclosure of all potential risks to the participant in a manner that promotes the opportunity for informed choice and is culturally and ethnically appropriate.

- evidence that each person served has been informed of his/her right to refuse to participate in or terminate participation in research activities with no reprisals.

- the use, disposition and release of data.

- assurances regarding the confidentiality of the participants.

15. Regular meetings between the LMC liaison and the researcher will occur to monitor the progress of the project. At each meeting, the researcher will furnish a written status report which will be kept on file in the project file.

16. Any materials requested of the researcher must be submitted in a timely fashion

17. The Center liaison (see #13) is responsible for assuring the welfare of participants and keep the Executive Director updated on the progress of the project.

**Appendix J:**  
**Instructor Consistency Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Instructor:**

**Please take a few minutes to complete the following brief survey. For each item, please rate the level of consistency that you believe you achieved between the instructions in the revised instructor's course manual for each area and the class that you just finished instructing.**

**1= Not Consistent 2= Minimally Consistent 3= Somewhat Consistent 4= Consistent 5= Very Consistent**

1. Introduction to the Course	1	2	3	4	5
2. Course Schedule	1	2	3	4	5
3. Impact of Divorce on Children	1	2	3	4	5
4. Divorce Issues for Children: Ages and Stages	1	2	3	4	5
5. Indicators of Children in Distress	1	2	3	4	5
6. Talking to Your Children About Divorce	1	2	3	4	5
7. Introduction to and Benefits of Chaining	1	2	3	4	5
8. My Plan for Telling My Child About the Divorce Worksheet	1	2	3	4	5
9. Communicating With the Other Parent: Keeping Children out of the Middle	1	2	3	4	5
10. Questions for "Children in the Middle" Video	1	2	3	4	5
11. Visitation	1	2	3	4	5
12. Chaining Exercise Handout (Part One)	1	2	3	4	5
13. Chaining Exercise Handout (Part Two)	1	2	3	4	5
16. Visitation: Making it Work	1	2	3	4	5
17. What Children Need from Visitation	1	2	3	4	5
18. What Children Don't Need from Visitation	1	2	3	4	5
19. The Grieving Process: Divorce as Loss	1	2	3	4	5
20. Moving Past Divorce: Barriers to Success for Adults	1	2	3	4	5
21. Important Legal Concepts for Divorcing Parents	1	2	3	4	5
22. Closing Comments	1	2	3	4	5

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Instructor:**

**Please take a few minutes to complete the following brief survey. For each item, please rate the level of consistency that you believe you achieved between the instructions in the revised instructor's course manual for each area and the class that you just finished instructing.**

**1= Not Consistent 2= Minimally Consistent 3= Somewhat Consistent 4= Consistent 5= Very Consistent**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Introduction to the Course                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Course Schedule                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Impact of Divorce on Children                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Keys to Successful Adjustment for Children           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Talking to Your Children About Divorce               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Children, Divorce and Development                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Divorce Issues for Children: Ages and Stages         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Indicators of Children in Distress                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Visitation   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. "Pain Games" Questions and Points to Review         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Visitation: Making it Work                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. What Children Need from Visitation                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. What Children Don't Need from Visitation            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Communicating With the Other Parent:                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. The Grieving Process: Divorce as Loss               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Moving Past Divorce: Barriers to Success for Adults | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Legal Concepts                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Important Legal Concepts for Divorcing Parents      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Closing Comments                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Responding to Questions/Concerns                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

James David Whitworth was born in Oceanside, California in 1961. After graduating from Orange Glen High School in Escondido, California in 1979 he worked for one year as a Counselor at Camp Sankanac near Spring City, Pennsylvania. He then completed his a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1985.

In May 1986, he was hired as a medical social worker at Medical Center Hospital in Punta Gorda, Florida where one year later he was promoted to the position of Director of Social Work Services. While holding that position, he also completed his Masters in Social Work from Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida in May 1990. In February 1991, he accepted a commission to the United States Air Force as a Clinical Social Worker in the Biomedical Science Corps. In that capacity, he has worked as the Director of Family Advocacy Programs at Sheppard AFB, Texas and Tyndall AFB, Florida. From June 1995 to June 1996 he was the Chief of Mental Health Services at Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea.

In the fall of 1997, he was selected to complete his Doctorate in Clinical Social Work from Florida State University through a fellowship from the Air Force Institute of Technology. While accomplishing that degree he has worked as the Assistant Director of the Parenting Course Evaluation Project for the Florida Supreme Court, Office of State Courts Administration.

He is a Licensed Clinical Social Work in the State of Florida and a Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work from the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work. He has been a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers since 1993. In 1995 he was selected as the Social Worker of the Year for the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers for his work in the prevention and treatment of intimate violence. Along with publishing articles in the field of Clinical Social Work, he has presented numerous workshops in Texas and Florida on the topics of intimate violence, substance abuse, and suicide prevention. Major Whitworth is currently the Chief of Air Force Family Research at the Headquarters of the United States Air Force at the Pentagon in Washington, DC.